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ABSTRACT

The second statewide direct writing assessment was conducted for grade eight by the California Assessment Program (CAP) in the spring of 1988. Each student wrote an essay in response to 1 of 45 prompts (writing tasks) representing 6 types of writing: autobiographical incident, report of information, problem solution, evaluation, story, and firsthand biography. A total of 294,859 essays were scored at 6 regional scoring sites by 384 teachers; this number includes a 5% sample of papers that was double-scored for reliability studies. Approximately 96% of the students who took the essay test comprehended the writing tasks and responded to the topic. Scores were assigned for rhetorical effectiveness, special features (such as coherence or elaboration), and conventions. Results revealed that most students wrote adequate or marginally adequate essays (62%), some wrote exceptionally well (12%), and others wrote poorly (22%). Eighth graders were most competent at reporting information, less competent at writing autobiography and firsthand biography, and least able to write a story and to produce the two kinds of persuasive writing. Also, students exhibited better control of conventions than of rhetorical strategies. Overall, students' scores increased. Recommendations for school administrators, teachers, and parents are included. (KEH)

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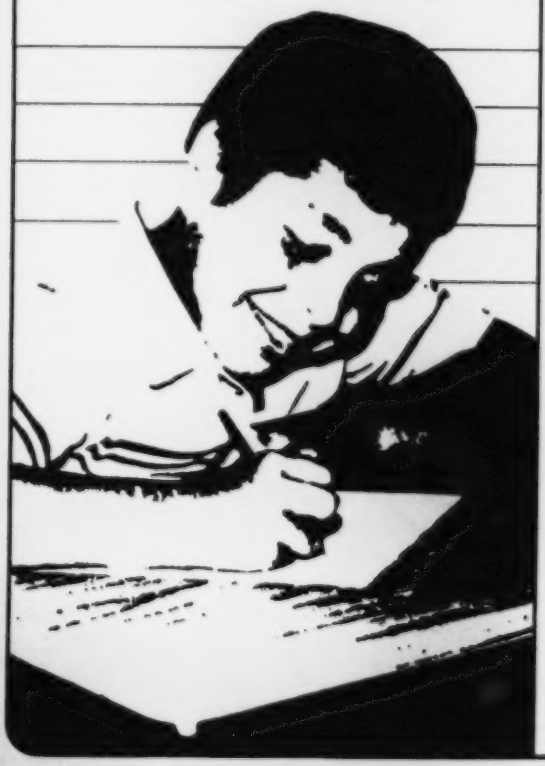
Writing Achievement of California Eighth Graders: Year Two

(1987-88 Annual Report)



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Writing Achievement of California Eighth Graders: Year Two

(1987-88 Annual Report)

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Contents

	Page
Acknowledgments	v
CAP Writing Development Team	vi
Chapter 1. Executive Summary	1
Major Findings	2
Recommendations	2
Chapter 2. Purposes, Design, and Development of the Assessment	4
Eight Types of Writing and Test Prompts	4
Test Administration and Regional Readings	6
Unique Scoring System	6
Three-Part Reporting System	7
Supportive Instructional Materials	8
Chapter 3. Writing Assessment: Autobiographical Incident	10
Writing Tasks	10
Achievement in Autobiographical Incident	11
Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary	11
Chapter 4. Writing Assessment: Evaluation	17
Writing Tasks	17
Achievement in Evaluation	18
Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary	18
Chapter 5. Writing Assessment: Firsthand Biography	24
Writing Tasks	24
Achievement in Firsthand Biography	24
Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary	25
Chapter 6. Writing Assessment: Problem Solution	30
Writing Tasks	30
Achievement in Problem Solution	31
Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary	31
Chapter 7. Writing Assessment: Report of Information	36
Writing Tasks	36
Achievement in Reporting of Information	37
Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary	37
Chapter 8. Writing Assessment: Story	43
Writing Tasks	43
Achievement in Story	44
Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary	44
Chapter 9. Summary of Writing Achievement	50
Major Findings	50
Comparisons of Achievement in Different Types of Writing	51

Comparisons of Achievement in Feature Scores 52
Achievement in Conventions 52
Statewide Average Achievement Levels 53
Context for the Achievement Results in Table 9-4 54
Implications of Achievement Levels in Table 9-4 56

Chapter 10. Recommendations 59
Recommendations for Teachers 59
Recommendations for School District and School-Site Administrators 61
Recommendations for Parents 62
Recommendations for Teacher Educators 62
School-Site Case Studies 64

Appendix A. English-Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee 67
Appendix B. 1988 CAP Essay Readers 69

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The second statewide assessment of the writing achievement of California eighth graders was an undertaking of major proportions. The success of this effort is a tribute to the students, teachers, and administrators across the state who have cooperated so generously during every phase of the project, conducted under the auspices of the California Assessment Program (CAP).

Special acknowledgment is due to the creators of the assessment: the members of the CAP Writing Development Team. Representing the California Literature Project and California Writing Project, this group of outstanding teachers has provided crucial leadership in test development, scoring, and staff development activities for CAP.

The spring, 1988, writing assessment, the second statewide assessment in California, culminates in this report. Members of CAP's English–Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee (Appendix A) and CAP Writing Development Team also reviewed sections of the report.

Every assessment is the result of a collaborative effort. Special acknowledgment is extended to John Bianchini for providing expert technical guidance and analysis; to Charles Cooper for shouldering final responsibility for prompt development, scoring guide development,and creation of *A Report to Teachers on Writing Achievement*; to Pat Elias for directing day-to-day practical and logistical operations of test development, test administration, and reporting; to James Gray, Mary Ann Smith, Mel Grubb, and Mary Barr for guidance, counsel, and wisdom in planning the assessment and coordinating statewide staff development activities; to Julia Stanfill for planning and implementing communication strategies on behalf of many audiences; to Barbara Voltmer for planning and coordinating the readings at six regional scoring centers across the state; to Pat McCabe for managing operations and monitoring statistical aspects of the reporting; to Barbara Weiss for overseeing report production and field communications; to Tom Fong for support in data processing; and to Sandy McDevitt for budgeting and personnel support.

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Chapter 1

Executive Summary

California's second statewide direct writing assessment was conducted for grade eight by the California Assessment Program (CAP) in the spring of 1988. Each student wrote an essay in response to one of 45 prompts (writing tasks) representing six types of writing: autobiographical incident, report of information, problem solution, evaluation, story, and firsthand biography. This report, based on state-level results from that assessment, provides California's educators, legislators, and citizens with data on the actual writing achievement of virtually all students in the state at one grade level and with data showing changes in the writing achievement of students from 1987 to 1988. In years previous to 1987, only multiple-choice tests of written language skills were administered by CAP.

California's writing assessment was designed to be a wide-range achievement test to reflect the goals and standards of excellence contained in the *English–Language Arts Framework* and its related curriculum documents. The assessment directly addresses guideline number thirteen in the *English–Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide*, which states:

> Students, after having opportunities to build background, write in many different modes of discourse, such as story, observation, biographical sketch, poetry, dialogue, essay, and report.

Six types of writing were assessed in 1988 for grade eight (autobiographical incident, report of information, problem solution, evaluation, firsthand biography, and story). Two additional types will be added in 1989 (speculation about causes or effects and observational writing), completing the array of writing types. As the assessment evolves, new prompts related to literary, historical, and scientific texts will be added to address a broader range of goals in the framework.

Two key groups are responsible for creating and guiding California's new direct writing assessment. The creators of all prompts, scoring guides, and the *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight* are the members of the CAP Writing Development Team, consisting of English teachers from across California who were selected for their extraordinary performance in the classroom. These teachers have also provided leadership in staff development efforts throughout the state, helping others prepare for the assessment. The recently formed CAP English–Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee provides guidance for the overall direction of the assessment. The committee consists of elementary and secondary school teachers; curriculum specialists, testing experts and administrators from school districts and offices of county superintendents of schools; university professors; and representatives from the California Writing Project and the California Literature Project.

The CAP Writing Development Team developed a scoring system so that each paper would be assigned three scores: a rhetorical effectiveness score, reflecting the thinking and composing requirements within a type of writing; a feature score, providing additional information about a characteristic in the writing, such as coherence or elaboration; and a conventions score, reflecting the degree of correctness in usage, punctuation, and spelling. All scoring guides were developed on a scale of 1 to 6, ranging from minimal evidence of achievement to extraordinary achievement.

During July, 1988, a total of 294,859 grade eight essays were scored at six regional scoring sites (Anaheim, Fresno, Lawndale, Sacramento, San Diego, and Walnut Creek) by 384 teachers in six days. The total number of essays consisted of the 271,168 papers collected in the assessment plus the papers that were reread from 1987 and a 5 percent sample of papers that was double-scored for reliability studies.

The test results revealed that students took the test seriously. Approximately 96 percent of the students who took the essay test comprehended the writing tasks and responded to the topic. Only 1 percent failed to respond to the writing task, and 2 percent did not respond to the topic.

Major Findings

Major findings from the assessment follow:

- California's grade eight students improved in the four types of writing assessed in both 1987 and 1988. From a starting point of 250 in 1987, the statewide score for writing rose to 256.
- In 1988, most students wrote adequate or marginally adequate essays (levels 3 and 4: 62 percent); a small percent of students wrote impressively (levels 5 and 6: 12 percent); and a larger percent of students wrote poorly (levels 1 and 2: 22 percent). These percents cannot be compared to the 1987 results because of differences in prompt difficulty from year to year.
- In 1988, grade eight students seemed most competent at reporting information (52 percent scored 4 or higher); less competent at autobiography and firsthand biography (40 and 42 percent, respectively, scored 4 or higher); noticeably less competent at story (33 percent scored 4 or higher); and markedly less skilled at the two kinds of persuasive writing in this assessment: problem solution and evaluation (only 28 and 27 percent, respectively, scored 4 or higher).
- Grade eight students have better control of conventions than of rhetorical strategies. For example, in writing evaluations, while only 27 percent scored 4 or higher for rhetorical effectiveness, fully 45 percent scored 4 or higher for conventions. For every type of writing assessed, students scored higher in conventions than in composing (rhetorical effectiveness).

Members of the CAP English-Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee were pleased to see the statewide improvement in writing achievement. The committee speculated that the gains may reflect the widespread acceptance of and enthusiasm for the *English–Language Arts Framework* and the movement away from "skill and drill" curricula.

Recommendations

Recommendations of the English–Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee and the CAP Writing Development Team for teachers, administrators, parents, and teacher educators are the following:

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers play a critical role in improving students' writing abilities. Their daily contact allows them the special opportunity to have the most direct influence on students' attitudes toward writing, their exposure to various types of writing, and their opportunity to develop their own writing skills. Toward this end, teachers should continue to contribute to writing achievement as follows:

- **Provide direct instruction in writing strategies required for different types of writing.**
- **Ensure that students read widely and analyze the same type of reading they are writing.**
- **Emphasize critical thinking and composing while at the same time encouraging students' mastery of conventions.**
- **Pay special attention to the rhetorical requirements of story and the two types of argument assessed so far by CAP—problem solution and evaluation.**
- **Offer instruction in writing that regularly involves a full composing process—prewriting (observation, reading, research, note-taking, discussion, or brief exploratory writings); drafting, teacher conference, and guided peer critique; revising, editing, appreciative peer readarounds; self-appraisal; and display or publication.**
- **Broaden instruction to include important types of writing CAP does not assess.**
- **Avoid formulaic teaching of the types of writing CAP assesses.**
- **Extend this intensive and sustained literacy program to all students.**

- **Inaugurate special-assistance tutorial programs for low-achieving students.**

Recommendations for School District and School-Site Administrators

District and school-site administrators can provide leadership as follows:

- **Enable administrators at all levels (from the superintendent to school-site vice principals) to understand California's curriculum reform in English-language arts and to examine the higher expectations and standards of the CAP writing assessment.**
- **Establish a school-site literacy policy that sets high standards for writing in all subjects.**
- **Ensure that CAP writing assessment materials are available to all English-language arts teachers.**
- **Bring all teachers together to discuss the possibilities for sustained writing in all classes at all levels.**
- **Assist teachers in recruiting well-qualified consultants.**
- **Assist teachers in developing school-site assessment programs, such as portfolio assessment or schoolwide assessment of writing samples.**
- **Make a special effort to help teachers schedule in-service training workshops extending over several sessions and led by qualified teacher-consultants.**
- **Reduce English class sizes.**

Recommendations for Parents

Parents can encourage their children's writing development as follows:

- **Show their children that they are especially interested in all the writing they complete at school.**
- **Ask their children to write.**
- **Encourage good teaching of writing by inquiring specifically about the amount and variety of sustained (multiparagraph) writing their children are being assigned in every class.**

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

California's four-year colleges and universities can contribute to the movement toward higher standards of literacy for all students in California's secondary schools as follows:

- **Offer English teachers in training a balanced program in literature, language study, and writing.**
- **Introduce students in English methods courses to the new *English–Language Arts Framework* as well as to CAP writing assessment materials.**

Readers should note the two school-site case studies included in Chapter 10 of this report. Both are "success stories," detailing the methods used to strengthen writing instruction in two California schools.

Chapter 2

Purposes, Design, and Development of the Assessment

California's grade eight direct writing assessment was designed to be a state-of-the-art assessment reflecting the *English–Language Arts Framework*. The grade eight writing assessment has five major purposes:

1. To establish standards of excellence for eight important types of writing and thinking for California's teachers and students of writing
2. To assess the implementation of the *English–Language Arts Framework* and *Model Curriculum Guide, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* at grade eight
3. To monitor achievement in California's middle schools and junior highs, detecting any decline or improvement in writing achievement at grade eight
4. To encourage more writing and more different types of writing in California classrooms; that is, more emphasis on higher-order thinking
5. To provide state-of-the-art information and materials that will help teachers strengthen writing programs

California's new grade eight writing assessment is unique in the nation. Special features that distinguish this program from other writing assessments are revealed in the following five-part description of the program: (1) eight types of writing and test prompts; (2) test administration and regional readings; (3) unique scoring system; (4) three-tiered reporting system; and (5) supportive instructional materials.

Eight Types of Writing and Test Prompts

I am learning to analyze essays for distinctive qualities rather than rely on my general holistic impression. As a result, I see how important it is to teach my students the distinctive characteristics of different types of writing.

—Comment from a teacher who scored the grade eight CAP assessment

Eight types of writing that reflect a wide range of writing experiences were selected to be phased in over a three-year period at grade eight: (1) report of information; (2) problem solution; (3) autobiographical incident; (4) evaluation; (5) story; (6) firsthand biography; (7) observational writing; and (8) speculation about causes or effects. The first four types were assessed in 1987. Story and firsthand biography were added in 1988; observational writing and speculation about causes or effects will be added in 1989.

The first step in developing the writing assessment was to make a comprehensive list of the types of writing to be assessed. A comprehensive framework, including types of writing that would be desirable in a complete writing curriculum, was sought. This framework covered a broad range of types, including personal, expository, fictional/poetic, and persuasive writing. The following criteria were used in selecting the eight types of writing for grade eight:

—Emphasis of the best school writing programs. Would California's best teachers of writing at a certain grade be likely to assign a particular type of writing?

—Students' reading experiences. Would students read the types of writing on the list?

—Students' cognitive development. Would students be developmentally ready to engage in a particular type of writing?

—Curriculum sequence between grades three and twelve. Would a grade-level set of writing types appropriately follow an earlier set and at the same time prepare students for a later set? What kinds of writing and thinking are needed for success in other disciplines, such as history-social science and science?

—Appropriateness for testing. Would it be fair to expect students to compose a given type of writing in a 45-minute testing period? Drama and poetry, while desirable in a complete writing curriculum, were judged inappropriate types of writing to be assessed.

Once the types of writing were selected for grade eight, writing tasks or prompts were developed for each type. For this purpose, the Department of Education, in collaboration with Educational Testing Service, created a special team of test developers, the CAP Writing Development Team. This group of outstanding California classroom teachers represents the California Writing Project, the California Literature Project, and a broad cross-section of the state.

The members of the CAP Writing Development Team developed many prompts for each type of writing to be tested. Each writing task for the grade eight test is divided into two parts: a writing situation and directions for writing. An illustrative prompt designed to assess evaluation writing follows:

Writing Situation:

Your English teacher has asked you and other students in your class to help select literature for next year's grade eight classes. Think about all the works of literature—stories, novels, poems, plays, essays—you've read this year in your English class. Choose the one you've enjoyed the most.

Directions for Writing:

Write an essay for your English teacher recommending your favorite literary work. Give reasons for your judgment that other grade eight students should read this work. Tell your teacher why this work is especially valuable.

The writing situation orients students to the type of writing they will be doing, and it gives them a specific topic or a choice of topics. It defines (directly and through examples) any special terms or concepts. It focuses students' thinking and planning and helps them anticipate problems they must solve and information they must generate as they write.

The directions for writing suggest requirements and features of the essay—without being prescriptive or formulaic. The directions provide a purpose for the essay, and they always mention readers, sometimes identifying a particular reader, at other times merely referring to general readers' expectations or needs. In *Education and Learning to Think*, a document created under the aegis of the National Academy of Sciences, the author, Lauren Resnick, seeks a working definition of higher-order thinking. Resnick suggests that, although thinking skills resist precise forms of definition, we can recognize higher-order thinking when it occurs. She goes on to offer the following characterization of higher-order thinking:

—Higher-order thinking is nonalgorithmic. That is, the path of action is not fully specified in advance.

—Higher-order thinking tends to be complex. The total path is not "visible" (mentally speaking) from any single vantage point.

—Higher-order thinking often yields multiple solutions, each with costs and benefits, rather than unique solutions.

—Higher-order thinking involves nuanced judgment and interpretation.

—Higher-order thinking involves uncertainty. Not everything that bears on the task at hand is known.

—Higher-order thinking involves self-regulation of the thinking process. We do not recognize higher-order thinking in an individual when someone else "calls the plays" at every step.

—Higher-order thinking is effortful. There is considerable mental work involved in the kinds of elaborations and judgments required.

Every prompt developed for every type of writing assessed by the California Assessment Program triggers thinking that can be characterized by all nine of the foregoing key features. Every prompt requires students to engage in nonalgorithmic, complex thinking involving uncertainty,

nuanced judgment, the application of multiple criteria, and the possibility of multiple solutions. In responding to a prompt students must find structure in apparent disorder by imposing and creating meaning. To do so requires considerable mental effort and judgment as well as considerable self-regulation.

The higher-order thinking involved in the CAP writing assessment contrasts with thinking elicited by a multiple-choice test in which the test maker "calls the plays" at every step as the student proceeds from question to question. Thus, there can be no doubt that CAP prompts assess higher-order thinking. See Chapter 3 in *Writing Achievement of California Eighth Graders: A First Look* (California State Department of Education, 1989) for a discussion of the prompt-development process.

Test Administration and Regional Readings

Reading these essays, good and bad ones, increases my desire to bring out the best writing in my students. Outstanding papers show what teenagers are capable of doing when properly directed; poor papers remind me how essential good training in writing has become.

—Comment from a teacher who scored the grade eight CAP assessment

In April-May, 1988, each of 271,168 students wrote an essay in response to one of 45 prompts representing six types of writing: autobiographical incident (10 prompts); report of information (9 prompts); problem solution (8 prompts); story (5 prompts); evaluation (8 prompts); and firsthand biography (5 prompts). The CAP writing assessment was administered as part of the battery of tests constituting the *Survey of Academic Skills: Grade 8*. The prompts were distributed randomly so that every student had an equal probability of receiving any one of the 45 prompts. Students were required to complete a student information form at the time of test administration. Examiners were instructed to allow a full 45 minutes of uninterrupted writing time for completion of the essay. Essay booklets were then returned to the primary contractor for the project, Educational Testing Service (ETS).

The essays were scored in six days under the direction of ETS at six regional scoring centers: San Diego, Anaheim, Walnut Creek, Sacramento, Fresno, and Lawndale. One type of writing was scored at each scoring center.

The following tabulation shows the numbers of scoring leaders and readers at each of the six centers and the number of booklets scored at each site:

Site	Leaders	Readers	Booklets*
Anaheim	9	58	52,900
Fresno	8	56	46,007
Lawndale	9	53	50,151
Sacramento	8	53	46,276
San Diego	9	54	51,543
Walnut Creek	9	58	47,982
Total	52	332	294,859

*Includes reliability studies and 1987 essays reread for score equating purposes

Unique Scoring System

It would be difficult to improve on the rhetorical effectiveness scoring guides. They give us a great tool for teaching and evaluating writing. No need to reinvent the wheel (now that we finally have one).

—Comment from a teacher who scored the grade eight CAP assessment

The scoring system developed for the CAP writing assessment was designed to be a state-of-the-art model for the nation. The system uses three types of scores to measure general as well as specific features in each essay. Each essay produced in the assessment was scored for (1) rhetorical effectiveness, which focuses on the special thinking and writing requirements for each type of writing; (2) a general feature, such as coherence, style, or elaboration, important to the type of writing being assessed; and (3) conventions of usage, grammar, and spelling.

A three-level scoring system has numerous advantages. The rhetorical score provides information about students' achievements in the special thinking and composing requirements of a type of writing; and, without creating restrictions or formulas, the scoring guide provides a clear road map to improved achievement. School reports of the results allow teachers to compare student achievement on different types of writing and to assess instructional strengths and weaknesses. The special feature score provides additional information about the ability of students to achieve coherence, provide sufficient support and elaboration, or reflect style in a given type of writing. The conventions score reveals students' mastery of the conventions of standard written English so that teachers can compare and contrast student achievement on higher-order composing skills (as reflected in the rhetorical and feature scores) to student achievement in the more mechanical supporting skills of standard usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. See

Chapter 3 in *Writing Achievement of California Eighth Graders: A First Look* (California State Department of Education, 1989) for details about the development of the grade eight scoring guides.

Three-Part Reporting System

I look forward to seeing how the eighth graders in our school did on the CAP writing assessment. I especially appreciate getting my own copy of the report to teachers.

I was impressed by the fairness of the evaluation process—all students are rewarded for what they do well.

—Comments from teachers who scored the grade eight CAP assessment

The results of the grade eight writing assessment are reported annually in three separate reports:

- *A Report to Teachers on Writing Achievement*, a narrative report of school results, is designed for instructional use by principals and teachers. It is scheduled for distribution in October.
- A school and district report entitled *Survey of Academic Skills: Grade 8 Writing Achievement*, which follows *A Report to Teachers*, is designed for reporting to the public, for making district and school comparisons, and for charting year-to-year progress. This report is normally scheduled for distribution in November or December.
- A state report provides California's policy makers, journalists, educators, and parents with statewide results and interpretations of the writing achievement of California's eighth graders and recommendations for improvement. Last in the series, this report always follows the school and district report.

Teacher Report

A Report to Teachers on Writing Achievement is specifically directed to teachers. A sufficient number of copies is provided annually so that every eighth-grade teacher can have his or her own copy. This report, although called a report to teachers, contains only school-level information and not individual classroom information. *A Report to Principals on Writing Achievement* is included as part of this annual mailing to every school site. This report is tailored to the information needs of principals and classroom teachers. It gives a short description of each type of writing tested and each type of score (rhetorical effectiveness, feature, and conventions) assigned. The results contained in this report are not intended for public reporting. One set of annotated student essays, illustrating performance at each score point on the 1-to-6 rhetorical effectiveness scale for each type of writing assessed, is typically included for every school principal to share with teachers for interpretive and instructional use. It is imperative that district administrators distribute copies of *A Report to Teachers* and *A Report to Principals* to the appropriate school sites or the benefits of these important resources will be unrealized for students and teachers.

School and District Report

The second report, entitled *Survey of Academic Skills: Grade 8 Writing Achievement*, follows *A Report to Teachers*. This report is designed for charting progress over the years, reporting to the public, and making school and district comparisons. This report begins with tables containing content-referenced descriptions of each score point for each type of writing assessed, answering the question: How well do the students in my school (district) write and compose in the eight types of writing assessed by CAP in a first-draft writing situation? Additional tables answer other questions, such as: How do my school and district compare to all other schools and districts in the state? How does my school compare to schools with similar background characteristics? How did subgroups (such as boys versus girls) within my school compare in writing achievement? Results are presented in a way that allows for comparisons among schools by accounting for the relative differences in difficulty among writing assignments. Results will be reported on the scale used for other CAP tests in which the statewide mean is set at 250 for the baseline year of testing (1987).

State Report

The third report is the state report, which presents the statewide results of the assessment. This includes year-to-year changes, patterns of strength and weakness statewide, illustrative essays, interpretations of the results for each type of writing, teacher comments, and recommendations. The first state report, *Writing Achievement of California Eighth Graders: A First Look (1989)*, contains a description of the assessment and an explanation of its rationale and development. Future state reports will not contain information on these topics in the same degree of detail. For this reason *A First Look (1988)* is the foundation document in the series.

Supportive Instructional Materials

I often give writing assignments related to the literature that we are reading. I think we should do even more to help students use writing to explore meanings in literature and use reading selections as models to help them improve their writing.

It is helpful to have a set of criteria for each type of writing so that I can communicate to my students how to improve their papers.

—Comments from teachers who scored the grade eight CAP assessment

Because the new grade eight CAP writing assessment represented a major departure for the California Assessment Program, materials were developed to help districts prepare for the new writing test. To meet this practical need, CAP created the *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight.* The existence of enriching, framework-aligned supportive instructional material is another feature unique to the CAP writing assessment.

The *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight* provides information for teachers, principals, testing directors, curriculum specialists, and superintendents. It includes an overview of the program, guidelines for management, and a discussion relating writing assessment and the curriculum.

The handbook contains a chapter (called a writing guide) for each type of writing assessed. Each writing guide provides practical information for teachers, including the definition of the type of writing, an explanation of its importance, characteristics of the writing type, exemplary student essays, an example of a student's writing process, classroom writing assignments, a published example of the writing type, a list of readings within the writing type, and a rhetorical effectiveness scoring guide. Each writing guide makes ample use of illustrative student and published models for the given writing type, and each concludes with the rhetorical effectiveness scoring criteria.

The CAP writing assessment and the writing guides are based on theory and research as well as on a definition of writing that challenges what James Britton calls in *The Development of Writing Abilities* (11-18) the "naive global sense of the ability to write." In *Research on Written Composition*, George Hillocks reports that the use of good pieces of writing as models remains an effective way to teach writing. Hillocks also reports that "scales, criteria, and specific questions which students apply to their own or others' writing also have a powerful effect on enhancing quality." Identifying exemplary models and deriving instructionally useful criteria depend on a framework or typology for classifying the variety of types of writing. Such a classification scheme must be specific enough to allow the emergence of useful and important distinctions between one type of writing and another.

Fortunately, such composition theorists as Moffett, Britton, and Kinneavy have begun to establish theoretical foundations for a needed schema of writing types based on whole writings that exist in the real world. Once a type of writing has been identified, a range of possible distinguishing characteristics and elements can be established for that type of writing so that useful criteria can be defined and exemplary, illustrative models identified for instructional purposes. Once students possess an understanding of how to make use of a variety of rhetorical elements in their writing (such as process narration of steps to implement a solution and anticipation of readers' objections in problem solution; or visual details, sounds or smells of a scene, dialogue, and specific narrative action in autobiographical incident), writing is demystified.

The reasons for a particular grade on a paper should no longer puzzle a student. Instruction can become more focused and supportive of students' needs, opening up a broader range of rhetorical possibilities for students as they develop confidence in one type of writing and then another. Of course, elements of writing mastered for one type of writing can be used for other related types of writing, as instruction moves across the range. Such an approach to writing instruction responds to guideline number thirteen in the *English–Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide*. Students, after having opportunities to build background, write in many different modes of discourse, such as story, observation, biographical sketch, poetry, dialogue, essays, and report. See *Writing Achievement of California Eighth Graders: A First Look* (California State Department of Education, 1989) for further discussion of the rationale and discourse theory underlying the assessment.

The best writing is so much more than following a formula. I am glad to see true emphasis placed on excellence.

—Comment from a teacher who scored the grade eight CAP assessment

Chapters 3 through 8 report on the achievement of California grade eight students in the six distinctly different types of writing tested in April 1988: autobiographical incident, evaluation, firsthand biography, problem solution, report of information, and story.

Each chapter contains a description of the type of writing assessed, tables and figures summarizing 1988 statewide achievement in that type as well as the change from 1987, and sample essays illustrating the full range of writing achievement. Each set of sample essays includes essays scored for rhetorical effectiveness at score points 1 through 6. Scores for the complementary writing feature and for conventions are also indicated. The three scores–for rhetorical effectiveness, feature, and conventions–are described in Chapter 9. Also in Chapter 9, comparative achievement and statewide averages for rhetorical effectiveness in all types of writing are presented.

In examining the sample essays in chapters 3 through 8, readers should keep in mind that the writers are thirteen years old. The best of them write exceptionally well but not nearly so well, of course, as outstanding high school seniors or college freshmen. It is crucial to remember, as well, that these are first-draft essays, written in 45 minutes, with limited time for planning or substantive revision. Readers should also recognize that the selected essay at each score point illustrates only one way to demonstrate the level of achievement represented by that score point. Although the scoring system provides detailed criteria for achievement at each score point, it also allows for the excellence of papers produced by divergent, creative thinkers.

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Chapter 3

Writing Assessment: Autobiographical Incident

The best papers continue to demonstrate what we all know about autobiography: concreteness, specificity and careful focus are important and can be taught. Scoring the papers has sharpened my understanding of "incident."

—Comment from a teacher who scored autobiographical incident

In autobiographical incident, writers tell a story from their personal experience. Besides narrating an incident, writers tell the reader what it has meant to them, disclosing the autobiographical significance of the incident. Thus, while this type of writing draws on the natural storytelling skills of students, it also helps them gain perspective on their personal experiences and find the form and the words with which to share this understanding with others.

The best writers orient readers to the incident by presenting the scene and other people who were present. They tell an effective story, using such strategies as dialogue, movement or gestures, names of people or objects, and sensory details. Writers may describe feelings, understanding, or reflections at the time of the incident; and they may also evaluate the incident from their present perspective, implying or stating its significance in their lives. The best writers use many of these strategies, selecting those appropriate to their particular writing situation. The challenge in writing autobiographical incident is to integrate appropriate strategies smoothly into a readable personal story, a task that is more demanding than it sounds.

In terms of Lauren Resnick's summary of the features of higher-order thinking (see Chapter 2), writing effective autobiographical incidents is every bit as challenging as writing convincing arguments or insightful analyses of literature. Using self-regulation of the thinking process, the writer must impose meaning, finding structure in apparent disorder. There is certainly considerable mental work involved in the kinds of elaborations and judgments required.

Autobiographical incidents are central to the books and articles that form a large part of the reading that adults do today, a strong testimony to the power that people's stories have in our lives. Autobiographical incident also prepares students to do other types of writing both in school and in their personal and working lives. As students realize the validity of their own experiences, they can use personal anecdotes as persuasive evidence in support of their ideas. Some of the most convincing expository essays are those that draw on writer's personal experiences to support and develop generalizations. In fiction, the ideas for stories and characters are often found in one's own experiences. As students learn to use their own lives and their daily experiences as a resource for writing, they enrich all of their writing.

Writing Tasks

In the April, 1988, statewide test, one of every six students received one of the different writing tasks centered on autobiographical incident. Each task focused on a particular type of

remembered incident, such as a challenge at which they succeeded or failed, a memorable holiday incident, or an occasion on which they took some kind of risk.

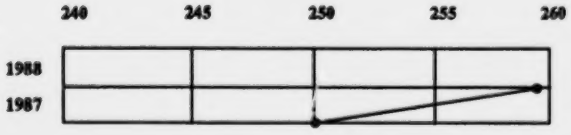
Each task invited students to write about a single incident that occurred in a short period of time—a few minutes, an hour, or, possibly, a day. They were encouraged to tell a story about this incident for specific readers mentioned in the writing task. They were reminded that their readers would expect them to reflect on the personal significance of the incident.

Achievement in Autobiographical Incident

Table 3 summarizes the achievement of California grade eight students in writing autobiographical incidents, while figure 3 indicates the change in performance between 1987 and 1988. Nearly 50 percent of the students in 1988 could relate a readable incident with a point, but only 14 percent could write an effective, memorable story through diverse narrative strategies. Stories—personal and fictional—are a familiar genre to thirteen-year-olds. All students experience stories repeatedly in non-print media—movies and TV dramas. From this experience with visual narratives, all students share a common basis for learning to write shaped, dramatic autobiographical incidents. To have any hope of fulfilling this promise, however, students also need to read and reread print narratives—published autobiography. Reading and discussing autobiographies with their teachers and classmates, students will have a sound basis for writing their own personal stories.

Figure 3

Change in Achievement in Autobiographical Incident Using a Scale Score



Note: The scale score calibrates differences among various prompts, weighing such variables as the difficulty levels of the prompts.

Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary

Score Point 6: Exceptional Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 6

Feature (Coherence): 6

Conventions: 6

1.7 percent of the students achieved this score.

I was impressed with the quality of writing of many of the students. They had such diverse styles and unique ways of expressing themselves. With a little guidance, writers of the weaker papers have the potential to improve.

—Comment from a teacher who scored autobiographical incident

Introductory Commentary:

This student writes about the frightening experience of falling into a riverbed from a rocky ledge. After a direct, informative introduction, the writer takes the reader back to the dramatic events leading up to the actual fall; recounts the experience of falling, of pain and fear; and concludes by expressing his continuing speculations on how much worse it might have been. The writer keeps the focus on a single incident, working out in considerable detail the narrative and scenic possibilities of the incident. The pace seems smooth and steady, slowing abruptly only at the dramatic moment of the accident. Mature readers can easily see ways this essay can be improved, and there are errors typical of hurried first-draft writing, but this essay is an impressive performance for a thirteen-year-old.

Frightened

One of the most frightening experiences I have ever had was the time I fell in the riverbed. I was so scared, I will probably have a vivid memory of the incident in my mind for as long as I live.

I remember it well; early November and a warm, clear early winter day. On this particular Friday, I chose to go over and visit my friend Ryan, who was my best friend in the fifth grade. My favorite hobby at the time was chasing and catching blue-belly and alligator lizards.

After school, we went to Ryan's house and got the supplies we would need. These supplies consisted mainly of brown paper lunch bags in which we held our captured lizards. We then rode our

Table 3

Achievement in Autobiographical Incident

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students*	Cumulative Percent	Description of Achievement
6 Exceptional Achievement	1.7	1.7	The student produces coherent, dramatically realized narrative which relies on a variety of appropriate strategies; successfully orients readers by presenting context, scene, and people; states or implies significance of the incident.
5 Commendable Achievement	9.5	11.2	The student produces coherent, engaging narrative which successfully orients readers; states or implies significance of the incident; lacks insight and range of strategies of the writer of a 6.
4 Adequate Achievement	28.6	39.8	The student produces a well-told incident that lacks the momentum and interest of a 5 or 6; orients readers adequately; states or implies significance but usually adds it to the end of the narrative.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	36.0	75.8	The student produces narrative that is brief or rambling; limited statement or implication of significance.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	16.4	92.2	The student produces general or fragmentary narrative with little if any orientation or reflection on significance.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	3.4	95.6	The student responds to prompt but with only the hint of a narrative.
No Response	1.1	96.7	
Off Topic	3.4	100.1	

* This column does not total to 100 percent because of rounding.

bikes roughly two miles before we came to the dried up Santa Ynez riverbed.

The riverbed was our favorite place to hunt for lizards, simply because there were so many to catch. We set our bikes down, and slid down the eight foot bank to the bottom of the rocky riverbed. Ryan got our paper bags and we were ready to start.

After the first twenty minutes, we had caught several small blue-belly lizards, and one large blue-belly which enjoyed biting our fingers. I was given the bag to carry as we walked farther along the dusty riverbed. I came to the familiar four foot ledge that I had jumped from so many times before, but this time something went wrong.

Ryan was about ten feet ahead of me, had already jumped from the ledge, and was continuing along the bank. I was crouching on the ledge, holding my lizards and preparing to jump. I looked at the ground below me, then at Ryan. Suddenly, I slipped and went sprawling head first to the ground. I smacked my head on a large rock and landed, breaking my fall with my wrist.

I stood up slowly holding my head, in somewhat of a daze. Ryan came running after hearing my fall, and asked me if I was alright. I told him I was, and then I realized I was bleeding all over my arm which was held to my forehead. Ryan began to run for help, and I told him to hurry.

I sat down, afraid I might die from loss of blood before he returned. My wrist and forehead ached, and I began to cry. I tried to stand up and walk toward the bikes, but I was too weak. I just sat and began to pray.

Finally, I heard a voice after what seemed to be an eternity. It was Ryan's mom, who helped me to the car. She then called my mom and told me to lie down. Next, she took a washcloth and washed the blood from my arm and head.

It seems hard to believe I was so frightened, but I was. I was all alone, bleeding badly, and afraid I might die before Ryan made it all the way home. One would not believe how frightened I became when I looked at my hand and saw the blood. I could not see how badly I had split my head open, so I didn't know how severe it really was.

After going to the hospital and taking X-rays, it turned out I was not in a really terrible condition after all. I had a fractured left wrist and a crack in my forehead, that was all. I didn't die, and as a matter of fact, I didn't even have a mild concussion.

Looking back upon that incident, I sometimes shutter, thinking about how serious it could have been. "What if I was bit by a rattler?" I sometimes ask myself. I also realize how important a good friend is, in order to take away some of the fear.

Score Point 5: Commendable Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 5

Feature (Coherence): 5

Conventions: 5

9.5 percent of the students achieved this score.

I am reminded how important it is for students to identify a rich incident, develop it as fully as possible, and gracefully integrate narration and reflection.

—Comment from a teacher who scored autobiographical incident

Introductory Commentary:

This student writes an engaging, coherent narrative about a treasure hunt that ended with soggy jellybeans as well as a soggy camper. Although the writer devotes too much space to the orientation, she handles the central event—falling "hind end first" into the water—impressively. She uses a number of narrative strategies—sensory details, specification, dialogue, suspense—but she was not able to bring them together into an ideal balance. As in the previous essay, this incident is fully framed with the context clearly stated at the outset, and the surprising significance of the event affords a satisfying closure.

Soggy Jelly Beans

It was a nice summer day up at Camp Tulequoia. The sky was blue and the lake was still. The head counselor had just announced at lunch that there was to be a treasure hunt across the lake at 2:00. He told us to clean our cabins and then get some rest, and be at the boat dock at 1:45. My cabin mates and I were lazily strolling back to our cabin, not wanting in the least to clean up our disaster area. We finally got there, after a little prodding from our counselor. We swept and cleaned as best we could, but that cabin would always be dirty. We plopped down on our bunks and started gossiping about the latest arrivals. We had about half an hour of "rest", then the bell rang and we slowly sauntered toward the boat dock.

At the dock, the swimming instructor told us the rules. We were to get with two other cabin mates and a counselor. We were to select a boat and row out into the lake, across to the other side and that's were the treasure was. I understood that and it

looked like everybody else did to. When the signal was given, I found my two best friends and our counselor and we jumped in the boat and took off. As we were rowing away the instructor shouted, "The person rowing must wear a blind fold." Oh great. So I put a blind fold on our bewildered counselor. Now she was a very strong rower and we were great navigators, so we made it there in no time. We docked the boat and set out to find the treasure. We found it in some old weeds and logs that were clumped together. We grabbed the prize, which was a canvas bag full of jelly beans our favorite snack, and ran to the waiting boat. We all jumped in and pushed off and were rowing in 30 seconds flat. I tied the blindfold on the counselor and she started to row like the devil. We shouted encouragement, we doused water on up coming competitors. We had the funnest time. As we came closer to the dock, I told my counselor to slow down a bit. I slowly guided her back. Telling her left oar or right oar. We finally docked. One of my friends latched the boat up and we helped our still blind-folded counselor out of the boat. Everybody got out. I was the last because I had the sack full of jelly-beans. I stood up half way, being very careful not to rock the boat. I slipped one leg onto the deck. But as I was attempting to pull the rest of my body out of the wobbling boat, I heard the latch come unlatched and I could see the boat drifting away. By now, all the boats were waiting to dock. But all I could feel was the terrible pain in my legs and the suddent feel of being engulfed in water. With all 150 campers, I fell hind end first into the Sequoia Lake. I still remember my best friend coming up to me while I was lifting myself and my destroyed pride out of the murky water and saying "Where's our jellybeans?"

After dinner, I was dried off and sitting in front of the campfire with my camp group. We were singing camp songs. I was enjoying a song when a guy camper came up to me and said, "I saw you in the lake today." That caused a smile to appear on my sullen face. We became good friends after that. At least I know I got something out of this incident other than soggy jellybeans.

Score Point 4: Adequate Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 4

Feature (Coherence): 4

Conventions: 3

28.6 percent of the students achieved this score.

We have taught many students to write papers that are "correct," but they are dull to the point of tears. I believe, though, that eighth graders can learn to write well, not just adequately.

—Comment from a teacher who scored autobiographical incident

Introductory Commentary:

This student engages her readers with a provocative title but confuses them in her attempt to open with a dramatic flair. The attempt must be acknowledged, however, and readers have no difficulty in following the rest of the essay. The central incident of the missing child becomes almost lost in this retelling of an incident in which the writer acted responsibly. The significance of the incident seems to be added as an afterthought rather than as an integral part of the narration. Still, the essay shows adequate achievement in this kind of writing.

The Trouble with Zeek

As I walked into our next door neighbor's house, I almost got hit with a piece of flying relish. When it hit the wall, it sounded as if you stepped on a hug-bug. Mr. and Mrs. Zarmitchtboughinsky told me these various things to do. For instance, feed little Zeek at 6:00 PM, change him at 7:00 PM, and put him to bed at 8:00 PM. I thought in my head, No Problem. They left and I was left alone with adorable Zeek. I found him watching Sesame Street, so I joined him. I got really involved that I forget I was watching Zeek. When a commercial came on I decided to get myself a snack, when it was then that I noticed that Zeek was missing! I looked all over for him, In the closet, under chairs and tables, in cupboards, and in rooms, but he was nowhere to be found. When I was about to call his parents, I glanced out the kitchen window and found Zeek playing out in his sandbox. Well that surely scared me to death. From there on, Zeek and I played house, watched T.V., ate dinner, changed his diaper, and put him to bed. At about nine o'clock at night, Mr. and Mrs. Zarmitchtboughensky came home from a lovely dinner. I told them that he was fine all night. I told them all the things we did (except the sandbox incident) they paid me and said whenever they needed a babysitter they'd call me.

This incident was significant to me because it gave me the chance to show how responsible I was at twelve. It gave me the courage to do it again and again.

Score Point 3: Some Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 3

Feature (Coherence): 3

Conventions: 3

36.0 percent of the students achieved this score.

Kids need to work on engaging openings and selecting appropriate details. They need to take risks.

I can help my students improve their story lines and avoid digressions.

—Comments from teachers who scored autobiographical incident

Introductory Commentary:

This student's essay about "meeting the hottest star" has a sense of story framework: the ending nicely recalls the opening scene of waking up on the floor. The central incident promised by the title, however, is merely pointed to rather than realized. The importance of the incident is left for the reader to infer; there is no thoughtful reflection on the writer's part. Although the essay has numerous spelling and punctuation errors, the writer's sentence sense makes it possible to follow her narration of the incident.

Meeting the Hottest Star!

One day a couple of weekes ago I woke up on my bedroom floor as I came to I was thinking how on earth did I end up down here. You see I had a bunk bed and my bed was the top one I got up there was no pain I thought that if you fall off a top bunk you might hurt a little but I didn't feal a thing right then I thought to my self it's going to be a good day. I meen hay I got my mom's checkbook so I got up and started getting ready. I thought to myself I think I'll go spend some money. I'll go to sunrise mall. As I was walking in the door I saw Him it was Truy Ames but what was he doing in Sunrise Mall lots of people were huteled around him asking for his autograph of course I ran over there. As I thought a minut it dawnd on me its a great day even if I did wake up on the floor.

Score Point 2: Limited Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 2

Feature (Coherence): 2

Conventions: 2

16.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

I will be more direct in my instruction of what an incident is (in terms of short, concentrated duration of time); I will also continue to stress diverse narrative approaches.

—Comment from a teacher who scored autobiographical incident

Introductory Commentary:

While this student is clearly writing about an experience that was very meaningful, the death of her "baby cat," she has not focused on the central incident. As a result, the experience is merely reported rather than dramatized for the reader. This student, unafraid to use such words as "paralyzed" (pralized) and unafraid to express feelings, could benefit quickly from the direct teaching of how to use the various strategies that we see in exemplary student essays.

Untitled

Well a while back I lost my baby cat. My brothers Chow hit my cat on the spine and damaged it's spine very bad. I tried everything to help him I tried pills to make him healthier, I took him to the Vet...They couldn't help him. One night I came home and he was pralized. He was real stiff. Yet he was still meowing for help. But still I couldn't help him. The next morning he died. I was very sad. I cried for two days. I wish I still had my cat tiger so I could hold him in my arms.

Score Point 1: Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 1

Feature (Coherence): 1

Conventions: 1

3.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

Students need instruction on writing as a process and on how to incorporate "show, not tell" techniques so that incidents are livelier. They should be made aware of authentic voice in their writing.

—Comment from a teacher who scored autobiographical incident

Introductory Commentary:

This student has an incident to tell but lacks control of the writing strategies to tell it. The incident is told in a string of flat statements that do not convey any of the drama of the situation, a friend's getting "hoked." There are some specific details (the friend is hooked on the inner side of his arm), but there is no reflection here, no glimmer of the personal significance of this incident. A student such as this might do well hearing taped versions of his or her stories, then learning to work with the written transcriptions.

Untitled

It was Easter Vacation we went fishing. Me My family and a friend. We went around the lake fishing we did not catch anything. So we went back to camp. My friend carted the pole out for the last time when he carted the pole the hook on the lure hoked him. On the iner side of his arm. My mom was a nurse. She called his parints to ask permishen to remove the hook his parint said. She could remove the hook. After removinge the hook we packe up and went home

Chapter 4

Writing Assessment: Evaluation

I know good writing is damn difficult to do and damn rare. I know kids need to practice it more and see good models of evaluative essays in order to do better.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Evaluators make judgments about the worth of a subject (a book, movie, restaurant, musical group) and then support each judgment with reasons, attempting to convince the reader of the soundness of the judgment. They may support their evaluations by means of both personal anecdote and external knowledge and authority, drawing on what they read and what other people say about a subject.

Making evaluations is a common experience in an adult's life. Every day we evaluate a wide range of subjects. For example, we evaluate the way we feel when we wake up and the way we look when dressed for work. We evaluate competing candidates for political office, controversial issues of national importance, the worth of certain consumer products, or different vacation spots. Our soundest judgments are based on criteria appropriate to the subject.

In evaluative writing, grade eight students are asked to go beyond their immediate and perhaps superficial reactions to a given subject. Students are asked to consider possible criteria on which to base an evaluation, analyze their subjects in light of the criteria, and select evidence that clearly supports their judgments. Evaluative writing involves nuanced judgment and the application of multiple criteria, which sometimes conflict with one another. The mutual work of making judgments and providing sound reasons with evidence are key features of higher-order thinking, according to Resnick's research (see Chapter 2).

The demands of working out a thoughtful written evaluation provide students with practice in confronting the increasingly complex choices in their lives. Growing toward adulthood, students will be faced with making significant evaluative decisions—whether to go to college, what job to take, where to live. Exploring decisions in writing can help writers to focus on various aspects of a situation before they make a final decision. The processes to be learned through writing effective evaluation, then, go far beyond a classroom essay; they have lifelong implications.

Writing Tasks

In the April, 1988, statewide test, every sixth student wrote an evaluation for one of eight writing tasks, three repeated from 1987. Students were asked to identify something they especially liked and to say why they liked it or to compare two things, stating their judgments as to worth or effectiveness. Students were asked to respond to such tasks as to write a letter to a favorite author telling why they especially liked one of the author's books, to justify their preference for a particular kind of music, or to convince the editor of the school newspaper that a particular school activity should be continued or dropped. Prompts also included such specific tasks as evaluating the advisability of using solar or electrical energy and evaluating the quality of two poems dealing with the same subject.

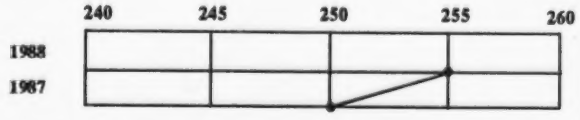
All the writing tasks identified particular readers, such as a teacher, a school newspaper editor, or an architect. The tasks encouraged students to give reasons and evidence to support their judgments. Students were advised to argue convincingly for their preferences and not just offer unsupported opinions.

Achievement in Evaluation

Table 4 summarizes the achievement of grade eight students in evaluation, while Figure 4 indicates the change in performance from 1987 to 1988. Nearly all students understand that an evaluation requires a judgment. Many students understand, as well, that giving a reason is the first step in making an argument. Everyday conversational arguments with parents or friends involve asserting judgments and giving reasons. The essentials of written evaluations, however—support or evidence for a reasoned argument justifying a judgment—seem to be understood by only 30 percent of the students tested, those scoring 6, 5, or 4. Very few students can write a developed, coherent, engaging evaluation.

Figure 4

Change in Achievement in Evaluation Essays Using a Scale Score



Note: The scale score calibrates differences among various prompts, weighing such variables as the difficulty levels of the prompts.

Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary

Score Point 6: Exceptional Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 6

Feature (Coherence): 6

Conventions: 6

0.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

I am struck by how much some students can accomplish in 45 minutes; how well they can sometimes marshalxs their ideas; and with how much flair and sparkle they can express themselves. I am also struck with how superficial and vacuous some of their reasoning is.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Introductory Commentary:

The broad range of topics and writing situations for evaluation prompts encourages an equally broad range of organizational strategies. In this score point 6 essay, the student has selected a traditional academic format to evaluate a pair of poems. The two poems, by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Theodore Roethke (1909-1963), have the same subject—snakes. The writer's task is to decide which poem is better and to write an essay for an English teacher, giving reasons and evidence for her choice. This writer states her judgment firmly and confidently, bases it on appropriate criteria (figurative language, writing technique, stanza form, and rhythm), and argues it energetically with evidence from both poems. She sustains the comparison of the two poems throughout the essay.

The flaws in this essay are largely attributable to the student's attempt to follow a prescribed pattern of academic evaluation. The student makes unwarranted claims for the superiority of the Dickinson poem, such as criticizing the Roethke poem for its lack of rhythm, while citing a stanza written in precisely uniform rhythm. The student refers to "a multitude of symbolism" and says that Dickinson "remarkably distributed her stanzas," phrases that are essentially meaningless in the context of the paper. The attempts to use language in a sophisticated way are marks of an inquisitive young person's stretching to sound adult.

This essay nevertheless represents exceptional achievement for an eighth grader. An opportunity to engage in a personal response to the two poems, discuss this first essay draft with a writing group, and revise the essay would certainly result in a more careful and more naturally phrased argument, but that possibility does not detract from the first-draft achievement here.

Untitled

Throughout the history of the English language, there have existed several extraordinary poets; thus, with them came exceptional compositions. Examples of some of the world's most remembered and renown poets are Emily Dickinson and Theodore

Table 4

Achievement in Evaluation

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students*	Cumulative Percent	Description of Achievement
6 Exceptional Achievement	0.4	0.4	The student produces convincingly argued evaluation; identifies a subject, describes it appropriately, and asserts a judgment of it; gives reasons and specific evidence to support the argument; engages the reader immediately, moves along logically and coherently and provides closure; reflects awareness of reader's questions or alternative evaluations.
5 Commendable Achievement	6.1	6.5	The student produces well-argued evaluation; identifies, describes, and judges its subject; gives reasons and evidence to support the argument; is engaging, logical, attentive to reader's concerns; is more conventional or predictable than the writer of a 6.
4 Adequate Achievement	20.5	27.0	The student produces adequately argued evaluation; identifies and judges its subject; gives at least one moderately developed reason to support the argument; lacks the authority and polish of the writer of a 5 or 6; produces writing that, although focused and coherent, may be uneven; usually describes the subject more than necessary and argues a judgment less than necessary.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	36.3	63.3	The student states a judgment and gives one or more reasons to support it; either lists reasons without providing evidence or fails to argue even one reason logically or coherently.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	27.9	91.2	The student states a judgment but may describe the subject without evaluating it or may list irrelevant reasons or develop a reason in a rambling, illogical way.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	6.4	97.6	The student usually states a judgment but may describe the subject without stating a judgment; either gives no reasons or lists only one or two reasons without providing evidence; usually relies on weak and general personal evaluation.
No Response	1.3	98.9	
Off Topic	1.3	100.2	

*This column does not total to 100 percent because of rounding.

Roethke. Although each of their compositions, "986" and "Snake," possesses its own unique quality, the poem "Snake" pales in comparison to the outstanding work by Emily Dickinson. The greater poem is evident through the comparison of figurative language, uniqueness, and writing style.

To begin with, Dickinson overshadows Roethke tremendously through her superb use of figurative language. For example, in describing the movements and actions taking place, Emily Dickinson does not simply state it as did Roethke, but she did so by using a simile. For instance, Roethke described the snake by stating "I saw a young snake glide," whereas Emily Dickinson descriptively said, "The Grass divides us with a Comb." Furthermore, Dickinson uses a multitude of symbolism in her poem; thus, contrasting with Roethke who did not.

Emily Dickinson also demonstrates her superiority by her writing technique. By using an unusual and complicated writing style, she establishes and captivates the readers' attention. For instance, she personifies the wind and many other Natural beings and thus accomplishes to capture the readers' interest since he is bewildered by her writing style. The topic, although simple, is used and described in such a way that the reader does not get bored—which Theodore Roethke failed to accomplish. This is true since Roethke only described the snake and did not even explain its exceptionality. He basically defined it and stated that he desired to be one without any explanation. On the contrary, Emily Dickinson describes Nature and the emotions that it evokes into people's minds. An example is:

"Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me—
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality—

Finally perhaps the greatest difference between "986" and "Snake" is the development of the stanzas. Roethke, probably not as experienced as Emily Dickinson, was not capable of establishing a catching rhyme scheme nor a good stanza separation. Dickinson, on the other hand, set a captivating writing style and remarkably distributed her stanzas. Roethke's inablility to establish a rhythm is seen as follows:

"I felt my slow blood warm
I longed to be that thing,
The pure sensuous form.
And I may be some time.

Contrastingly, Emily Dickinson's extraordinary writing style can be seen through the following excerpt:

"But never met this fellow
Attended or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And zero at the Bone—

In conclusion, the ability to use such exceptional figurative and symbolic language, to capture the readers' interest, and to properly develop and conclude her stanzas separates Emily Dickinson's poem with that of Theodore Roethke. Her experience in writing allows her to be more creative and unique and it can be seen in "986." Therefore, due to her cleverness and ingenuity, Emily Dickinson accomplished one of the greatest works in the history of American Literature.

Score Point 5: Commendable Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 5

Feature (Coherence): 5

Conventions: 4

6.1 percent of the students achieved this score.

I think good evaluative writing is difficult even for good students. As I see it, most kids have trouble doing more than just summarizing. They need to learn to develop substantial reasoning behind why they like or dislike something.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Introductory Commentary:

This essay in the form of a letter recommending a favorite book to a friend reminds us that an essay at score point 5 represents truly commendable achievement. The writer maintains her stance toward her fictive audience with constant references to her friend, even withholding the ending of the book with a tantalizing hint. The enthusiasm of the writer points to her personal involvement in the story; she is quite explicit about what she has learned about brother-sister relationships. More concrete evidence from the book, as further enticement, could have lifted this essay to the level of a "6."

Untitled

Dear Tami,

I know I have been promising to write you for quite some time now, but I was so wrapped up in this spectacular book that I was reading that I

forgot to write you. Down the Long Hills was definately the best book I had ever read, and I can't wait to tell you about it in person so be prepared to hear about one great book in your long awaited letter.

When you see average brothers and sisters you picture them allway fighting and yelling at each other. Well the brother and sister in this book displayed a bond of love that could never be broken. This made me realize how important your brother and sister are, and that when ever your with them you know that nobody could ever love you more than they do. The pair in this book were stranded in the wilderness and were constantly being harrased by mother nature and they never ever argued or fought among themselves. Now if that isn't a true bond than I guess I dont know what one is.

I learned a valuable lesson as I read this book. I learned that you can't give up no matter what your doing, or how hard you task is. The children in this book were confronted by snowstorms, grizzly bears and wild Indians but they never quit, they kept on going and they never gave up their search to find their papa, I truly learned a lesson in determination, and whenever I set out do something I will rember this book.

If you love heart pumping nail grinding action you'll love this book. It captures your intrest throughout the whole book. Just when you think things are slowing down the bounce back up agian and before you know it your on another hairraising adventure. I would say being chased by bandits, hunted by wolves, shot at by Indians could satisfy anyones need for action.

Its to bad that I cant tell you how it ends but I guess youll just have to wait and find out for youself. I know this letter is long overdue but I certainly believe that writing to you about this book has made up for how late it is

Score Point 4: Adequate Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 4

Feature (Coherence): 5

Conventions: 5

20.5 percent of the students achieved this score.

I still need to work with my students on rhetorical stance, developing an awareness of one's audience, and on voice.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Introductory Commentary:

This evaluation of a favorite book takes the same letter form that the representative score point 5 essay did, but the contrast is significant. In this essay, the student frames the essay with an awareness of "Joe," a real or fictive friend; but the central part of the essay, containing the reasons and evidence, is lifeless, voiceless—a flat sequence of parts of the book that were "good." While the specific anecdotes from the book are well-chosen, they are not adequately developed or contextualized.

Untitled

Dear Joe,

I am sending this book, Across five Aprils, for you to read it, I found this book about a boy's life during the Civil War very enjoyable, especially once I got into the different levels of it. I think you would like the danger and the irony in this book the most.

One part that is full of excitement and danger and is ironic is when Dave Burdow, the low life, saves Jethro, the main character, form certain doom. If Dave had not taken the reins of the horses Guy, Wortman, the local bully and thief, would of caused the wagon to fall off a bridge killing Jethro. Another part that is good is when Jethro thinks fighting was great and then he changes mind after one of his brothers get killed in the war.

Well, I don't want to spoil the book for you, so I will stop telling you about it. Read this book next week. By the way, I will want to hear how you like this book. I'm sure you won't be sorry.

Score Point 3: Some Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 3

Feature (Coherence): 4

Conventions: 5

36.3 percent of the students achieved this score.

If students are to evaluate truly, lots of modeling must be done, especially of how to establish criteria and apply criteria to what is being evaluated.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Introductory Commentary:

This essay illustrates that the five-paragraph-theme formula is no guarantee of strong content and serious thinking in a particular rhetorical situation.

The essay is tidily organized and virtually free of sentence-level errors. It fails, however, to present a convincing argument to support the writer's choice of the two poems. Its criteria are appropriate, but it includes only one piece of evidence.

Untitled

These two poems both realte to the same subjects. I evaluate the second poem, "986" by Emily Dickinson, as being more effective than "Snake", by Theodore Roethke.

My first reason for this judgment is that the second poem is more interesting. It is longer, which helps to get more meaning across. More vivid description is used to portray the subject.

The second reason for my evaluation is that the second poem has more levels than the first. More symbols are effectively used, like the symbol, "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" which symbolizes the snake. It seems like the second poem has more effort put into it.

A final reason for this judgment is that the second poem has more metaphors. The poem makes the reader dig down and think to figure out what it is about.

The second poem is better in my opinion. It is better because of all the reasons I have listed.

Score Point 2: Limited Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 2

Feature (Coherence): 2

Conventions: 2

27.9 percent of the students achieved this score.

More emphasis should be placed on critical thinking, supporting judgments, and tying thoughts and ideas together. Far too many papers digress, summarize, underdevelop, or state totally irrelevant facts.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Introductory Commentary:

This jumbled essay responds to a difficult writing task: choosing electrical or solar energy for a house and defending the choice. The student's choice is clear, and he or she gives reasons for the choice but does not develop them. The strongest feature of the essay is its concession that electricity can be dangerous. In a classroom situation, a teacher could help this student sort out his or her ideas and present a more convincing evaluation.

Untitled

Dear Architecter

I have made my decision on Electrical energy because I think it would be best for my house because where I want to build by house I want it to have a lot Electrical outlits and I think Solar would be to less for my house Solar needs a lot of the Suns Solare energy and I would like to have alot of Electrical aplienses for my house. Electrical energy would be better for more houses because the Solar wouldn't give off that much power. Electrical energy would heat your home better than Solar energy. Electrical energy is a big problem. Because it could cause death and even lead enjory Most of your new homes are profided with Electrical energy. Inspectors that come to your house like good Electrical installment without that they could say your house or have you put in a hole new installment of Electrical wiring that way it is good for you to have the write Architecter and the write installment. So my write choice is Electrical energy.

Score Point 1: Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 1

Feature (Coherence): 1

Conventions: 1

6.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

Students generally need to develop skills in giving evidence to support their judgments. I plan to spend more time on these thinking skills next year.

—Comment from a teacher who scored evaluation

Introductory Commentary:

This essay demonstrates an evaluation that is on topic but undeveloped and incomplete. The student does make a judgment and begins to list reasons why K—Mart is the "Store of the Year." This student needs a supportive writing environment with both teacher and peer group help to improve his or her evaluation.

Store of the Year

The Store I choose had to have a variety of things for the customers—So, I choose K mart.

K—Mart has some thing for everybody. For Mothers, It has kitchen Utensule Vision cook wear set that let's you see what your cooking. Blenders for Blending thing. For Furthers their is a Garage Wear he could take the car for a tune up & change the tires. For the kids

Chapter 5

Writing Assessment: Firsthand Biography

It was most rewarding to come across a well-crafted biography of an older person. The sensitivity these young authors displayed toward significant other people in their lives was touching. How I wish some of those grandparents, aunts and uncles, and neighbors could read some of the essays written about them.

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Firsthand biography, first tested in April, 1988, is a type of autobiography. Although the focus is on the subject of the biography, the writer also reveals the personal quality of his or her relationship with the subject. In firsthand biography, the writer reveals another person's character and behavior through describing recurring activities and specific incidents. As students explore both the subject and themselves, through describing the subject and importance of the relationship, they draw on many key features of higher-order thinking. In gathering, selecting, organizing, and synthesizing information, students engage in effortful, self-regulated thinking, imposing meaning on what would otherwise be an unfocused listing or sequencing of items, to use the terms in Resnick's review of research on higher-order thinking (see Chapter 2).

Many strategies—sensory description, dialogue, specific narrative action—are available to the writer of firsthand biography. The best essays will not be determined by a prescribed ordering of description or narration but by the natural unfolding that emerges from the student's understanding of and experience with this kind of writing.

Writing Tasks

In April, 1988, the first year of testing firsthand biography, students were asked to respond to one of five writing tasks. Each task involved students in making a choice of someone to write about, someone they knew well who was important in their lives.

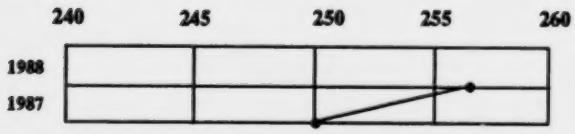
The range of subjects suggested by the writing tasks included someone who had encouraged the writer, a person who entertained the writer, and an older person they know well.

Achievement in Firsthand Biography

Table 5 summarizes the achievement of California grade eight students in writing firsthand biography, while Figure 5 records the scale score. More than 10 percent of the students could present a person vividly, using a variety of strategies, and convey a clear sense of the importance the subject had in the writer's life, scoring a 5 or 6; while 42 percent were able to demonstrate adequate achievement or better, scoring at least a 4. Nearly all students were able to identify someone important to them; many conveyed touching accounts of memorable relationships. It will be a challenge to provide students with a wide range of opportunities to read widely in autobiography, where firsthand biographical sketches abound, and to write extensively in this personal type of writing.

Figure 6

Change in Achievement in Firsthand Biography Using a Scale Score



Note: The scale score calibrates differences among various prompts, weighing such variables as the difficulty levels of the prompts.

Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary

Score Point 6: Exceptional Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 6

Feature (Style): 5

Conventions: 4

1.2 percent of the students achieved this score.

The most readable papers were those that caught the reader with a strong opening—some dialogue, a question, arresting description—before following up with specifications of the person and insights into the person.

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Introductory Commentary:

This writer takes a risk and succeeds. The risk is in presenting the biographical subject (Aunt Fern) through a single incident, relying mainly on dialogue, and in leaving the personal significance of the relationship implicit (except for the "dearest" in the first sentence). There is much more we might have been told about Aunt Fern, but the writer, responding to the task of presenting a person whom the writer finds entertaining, nevertheless leaves us with a vivid impression of Aunt Fern as a funny, delightful, and endearing woman. The writer gives us only a few visual details; and instead of history and context about Aunt Fern, we get only the blue, sputtering 1964 Buick, a brilliantly successful detail to single out. In direct response to the task of writing about a person whom the writer finds entertaining, the writer focuses on the humor and leaves us laughing or at least envious of Aunt Fern's humor. We do not doubt that the aunt is a memorable, significant presence in the writer's life. With time for revision and time to clean up the editing errors, this student would have a charming finished essay.

Entertainer

My dearest fat Aunt Fern steps out of her blue 1964 Buik. Chris, my brother is waiting on the porch while my mother is watering the lawn.

"Look! Auntie Fern is here! Chris spills out in joy as he sees Fern waving her arms out and yawning.

"My, my. It's so nice to be here and just inhale this fresh, Corona Air 'no smog in site!" Even though there is a stage 2 smog alert today, Aunt Fern jokes around so much that sometimes you aren't sure wheather she means what she says or not. Aunt Fern is a chubby lady, with silver hair, funny looking glasses, and has a charming face that goes along with her personality.

"Come give Fernie o hug, Christopher!" My brother hates that name and Fern knows it. Aunt Fern shrugs and says "Please don't hurt me? If you do I'll whack you with my purse!" She says laughing as Chris runs up and gives her a hug. She enters the house and sees my mom watering.

"Don't you squirt me! My finger is fat enough to plug up that hose!" My mom smiles and goes back to watering.

Aunt Fern is my Dad's sister, and they do joke around with each other quite a bit. My dad walks in the room and gives her a cup of coffie.

"Looks like you've gone on a diet! You look really skinny! My dad starts laughing and so does Auntie Fern.

"It's scale size to you brain!" We burst out in laughter. My dad sits down on the opposite couch. He rests his arm on a fuzzy pillow.

You look like a gorilla! Either that did it, Chris threw a live histeric laughing and rolling across the floor. She continued with her story about going to Africa over spring break. She made jokes about the Africans and natives, too.

Just then my dad explained that he had to pick my cousin up at a friend's house. We all came outside and my mom showed Aunt Fern our new Jeep Cherokee. He got in, started the engine, and rolled down the driveway to pick up Jason. Fern shouted out after him.

"I could do better than you without a car!" We couldn't believe how she thought of those things.

After a day at the movies my aunt left for Minnasota again. That has been the last we have seen of her, and her old 1964 Blue Buik sputtering down the street.

Table 5

Achievement in Firsthand Biography

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students*	Cumulative Percent	Description of Achievement
6 Exceptional Achievement	1.2	1.2	The student presents a comprehensive, complex characterization of a person using a variety of descriptive and narrative strategies; conveys the importance of the person in the writer's life clearly, either explicitly or implicitly.
5 Commendable Achievement	9.4	10.6	The student presents a person vividly but in less depth with less complexity than in a 6 essay; uses several strategies for characterization; significance may be less well integrated into essay.
4 Adequate Achievement	31.5	42.1	The student presents a clear picture of the subject but uses fewer strategies; resulting characterization may seem overly simple. Incidents, when used, may be too long, not directly relevant; significance may be simply tacked on.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	40.2	82.3	The student names subject; lack of control of strategies results in a generalized type of characterization. Student may focus on self rather than subject. Significance usually unclear or undeveloped.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	13.7	96.0	The student may make unsupported generalizations, present random details, or focus on the writer; essay may be rambling, containing irrelevant details; significance is rarely conveyed other than in a statement.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	2.5	98.5	The student conveys little meaningful information about the subject. Recurring activities may be mentioned. Incidents are rarely present. Significance may be flatly stated but is seldom mentioned.
No Response	0.3	98.8	
Off Topic	1.2	100.0	

*This column does not total to 100 percent because of rounding.

Score Point 5: Commendable Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 5

Feature (Style): 5

Conventions: 5

9.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

I would love to have a chance to work with some of these students whose papers could so easily be sixes.

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Introductory Commentary:

This student has taken on the difficult task of presenting a friend from her own age group. In contrast to the 6 essay, this paper relies on visual details and generalized, recurring activities. The incident referred to, the fight with her friend Nikki, is not presented dramatically. Still, the essay is very strong. The significance of Dave in the writer's life is explicit and successfully integrated into the essay. With specific suggestions on how to present relevant incidents, this writer could easily write a 6 essay.

Untitled

Whenever I think of Dave, I see him standing before me, grinning from ear-to-ear, wearing jeans and his nail polish-stained camp shirt, and holding his U2 and Bob Marley tapes. Dave Welch is one of the most friendly and caring people I have ever met. Perhaps that is why I consider him different. Dave has the best sense of humor at our shcool, always cracking jokes and laughing. To me, everything physically about Dave is one of a kind. He wears the same dirty white shoes everyday, and his dark blue jeans are, without fail, rolled up twice at the legs. His T-shirts describe him perfectly—his taste in music, what he likes in a person—Dave's shirts show off his wackiness. The most wonderful thing about him, though, is his attitude. Dave lets his love for people shine through him, making everyone around him comfortable. Sometimes, eighth graders can be cruel and it is helpful to know that Dave is different and that he is always on your side, never turning against anyone.

My friend Nikki and I were once in a fight, and it must have been difficult for Dave because he was a friend of Nikki's as well as mine. He handled this situation with tact and class, befriending both of us. Whenever I have a problem, I try to think about how he would handle the same situation, Dave is a role model for me, and I would hope that people look at me the same way I look at him—with love for a wonderfully friendly and one of a kind person in my eyes.

When I am feeling low, I look for Dave. When I am excited and happy, I want to share it with him. I know that, unlike others, Dave Welch will forever be sending me his big "cheshire cat" grin.

Score Point 4: Adequate Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 4

Feature (Style): 4

Conventions: 4

31.5 percent of the students achieved this score.

It is heartwarming to read these family stories. Even when the kids don't have all the skills they need, their willingness to open up their hearts comes through.

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Introductory Commentary:

Even though this student was responding to the task of writing about someone who was entertaining, she quickly found that her own focus was on how important her grandmother is to her. In a very solid essay, the student establishes that importance, presents the grandmother visually, and narrates one especially memorable incident. This student would benefit from frequent opportunities to write without fear of being judged; her earnestness and concern with being "correct" does not allow her voice to come through.

Entertainer

My Grandmother is the person that entertains me. She helps me make decisions about my problems. She help me see the right and wrong way to do things.

My Grandma has brown hair and hazel eyes She is five feet seven inches tall and wears dark-rimmed glasses. She has a nice figure and she wears beautiful clothes. My Grandma and I went shopping. I saw, what I though was, the most adorable kitten in the window of a well known pet store. I told her how I felt about the kitten playing quietly with the store felines. It was two day before my birthday and she

wanted to give me something special. My Grandma told me that if my mom would let me care for the kitten she would buy it for me. My mom said no because we lived in an apartment. Then, my Grandma asked my mom that if she took care of it could I have it. My mom agreed to my Grandma's generous suggestion. My cat, Chappy, lived with my Grandma for four years until we bought a house.

My Grandma is extremely important to me. When I was young my mother could not support me too well. My Grandma let us stay in her enormous house. She bought me clothes, food, and all of the other things a child needs to grow up. My grandma is important to me because she helped me grow up to be the person I am today.

Score Point 3: Some Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 3

Feature (Style): 3

Conventions: 3

40.2 percent of the students achieved this score.

Most eighth graders respond well to the idea of writing about someone important to them. I can see, though, how crucial it is to teach them how to transform the idea into a richly presented characterization.

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Introductory Commentary:

This student has only one way of presenting the character of the mother—stating that fact over and over. The one incident (in paragraph 3), even though it is not developed, saves the essay from a "2" score. The reader is left with no distinct impression of the mother, just the fact that she is a good listener.

Untitled

A person that really listens to me, would be my mom. I picked my mom because she always listens to what I have to say, and always wants to know my opinion. She also likes to know what my thoughts are.

I think the reason my mom listens to me is because she cares. My mom and I are really close and we always listen to each other.

One time I got a bad grade in a class, because the class was really hard and I was able to talk it out with my mom My mom listened and helped me the next quarter. She helped me with the class and I got an A. By listening to the problem a lot can be accomplised. I got lots of help and it helped me a lot.

My dad also listens to me, but I am closer to my mom. Not close in a loving way, but in a way, where I feel I can talk to my mom more.

My mom is a really good listener always when I'm in trouble or just plain talking.

This person is important in my life, because she is always there when I need her and she helps me out all the time. I really appreciate her listening and hope that she continues.

The thing that makes him or her special is that I can tell they care and listen. My parents are very understanding and caring, and I hope they stay like that. I think they will.

Well, now that I have told you, who the listener is, and how important she is, I think you will understand better. I hope I have explained enough about the topic to give you an idea on who I think the best listener is. It's my mom!

Score Point 2: Limited Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 2

Feature (Style): 1

Conventions: 2

13.7 percent of the students achieved this score.

Students need help in learning how to flesh out their stories. I often have the feeling that there is a real person somewhere behind these brief sketches.

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Introductory Commentary:

This brief essay opens with a contradictory statement about the subject, a friend of the writer. The friend, Kim, is never realized beyond naming and vague, generalized claims. One incident is referred to, but not presented. The writer does use dialogue (although without any identifying punctuation) but does not follow up on its possibilities. This writer does seem capable of learning strategies for writing successful firsthand biography.

Untitled

I have this friend that goes to my school her name is Kim. Everyone likes her but then they don't.

I think they dont like her because were ever we go there she is. I don't have a problem with her, were not best friends but were close. While we were walking down the hallway I saw that something was wrong so I asked her if she was ok she said not really so I said you can tell me she paused for a minute then said she was having problems at her house. My friends just smiled like they didnt care and that hurt me.

I had Kim call me that night so we could talk about it and we did now she seems to be a little happyer and that made me feel happyer.

Score Point 1: Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 1

Feature (Style): 1

Conventions: 1

2.5 percent of the students achieved this score.

Reading these papers makes me want to go right back to the classroom and get to work!

—Comment from a teacher who scored firsthand biography

Introductory Commentary:

This essay tells us little about the subject, about the friend, or about the importance of the relationship. One incident is mentioned but it is not developed and does not characterize the friend. A response group experienced in asking questions to elicit details would help this student learn to go beyond the introduction.

Untitled

My friend is 16 years old. Him and I go downtown together we go to ramp we ride his ramp on bike. One time he took me to a bike show. It was great they did all kinds of trixs. They gave out stickers and posters.

Chapter 6

Writing Assessment: Problem Solution

Problem solution is directly applicable to real life. All thinking adults need to be able to think a problem through and write logically about it.
—Comment from a teacher who scored problem solution

Problem solution asks the writer to define a problem, propose one or more solutions, and convince the reader of the feasibility of the solutions. In writing about a problem and its solutions, students are inevitably drawn into cause-and-effect thinking about the history and consequences of the problem. They may choose to argue that the problem exists and is serious. Proposing a solution, students may choose to narrate a step-by-step plan for implementing it. Their task is to convince readers of the possibility of the solution and perhaps even persuade them to act. In doing so, they learn to consider readers' objections and weigh the merits of alternative solutions. In all these ways, problem solution provides grade eight students with an introduction to the complexities of argumentative writing.

Any problem solution activity—even one based on a familiar school or community problem—can be a sustained and realistic exercise in problem solving and critical thinking. Problem solution involves students in several key features of higher-order thinking as defined in Resnick's review of the research (see Chapter 2). It often yields multiple solutions, each with costs and benefits, rather than unique solutions. It also utilizes the key feature of uncertainty; not everything that bears on the task at hand is known.

Problem solutions are ideal for introducing eighth graders to all the basic strategies of argument relied on by adult speakers and writers. Students can select a school or community problem they know firsthand and then develop their ideas and arguments in a sophisticated way—with the help of a knowledgeable teacher and of other students who know the requirements of this unique writing situation.

Writing Tasks

In the April, 1988, statewide writing assessment, students responded to one of eight writing tasks. Each task posed a personal, school, or community problem and directed students to propose a solution to it for particular readers.

In one school-oriented task, students wrote a letter to a group of parents working to make school lunches more appealing and nutritious. Students were asked to explain why most students dislike the lunches and propose a solution to the problem. The task emphasized the importance of convincing parents to take the proposed solution seriously.

Some writing tasks asked students to deal with problems of communication with friends or parents. Still other tasks dealt with larger issues. In one, students were asked to write a letter to the president of a local mall merchants' association, suggesting ways of dealing with the problems created by teenagers at the mall. In another, students, using information in an accompanying illustration, were asked to write an article suggesting solutions to the problem of energy conservation.

In all prompts students were directed to explain what the problem was, perhaps exploring some of the reasons for the problem or giving a history of previous attempts to resolve it,

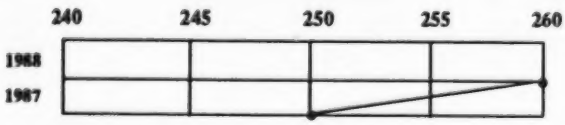
and to suggest one or more solutions, arguing for the one or two they felt most workable.

Achievement in Problem Solution

Table 6 summarizes statewide achievement in writing problem solution papers, while figure 6 indicates the change in performance between 1987 and 1988. Nearly all students recognize a problem solution writing situation and can come up with some kind of solution to a problem. About 30 percent of students (those scoring 4, 5, or 6) are able to provide a rich context for the problem itself and develop extended, convincing arguments for solutions, using arguments that reflect continual awareness of readers' objections, preferences, and values. Problem solution, a remarkably reader-centered and action-oriented type of argument, challenges thirteen-year-olds to analyze their readers and develop an argumentative strategy the readers will find convincing.

Figure 6

Change in Achievement in Problem Solution Using a Scale Score



Note: The scale score calibrates differences among various prompts, weighing such variables as the difficulty levels of the prompts.

Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary

Score Point 6: Exceptional Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 6

Feature (Coherence): 6

Conventions: 6

0.8 percent of the students achieved this score.

I learned exactly what a 6 is: highly developed, oriented to readers, convincing in its argument. I'm going to work on making sure students learn how to address a problem, think clearly about solutions, and convince their readers.

—Comment from a teacher who scored problem solution

Introductory Commentary:

Writing to convince an executive of a mall merchants' association to reconsider a rule banning students under sixteen from a mall unless they are with their parents, this writer presents a careful argument which seriously attempts to solve the problem in a way acceptable to the mall merchants. The writer controls syntax and conventions impressively; but just as important, she has learned how to think critically and sensitively in a complicated rhetorical situation. With every sentence, she reflects that she is thinking carefully about what might convince the merchants. She is tactful and strategic but at the same time she does not equivocate in her analysis of the problem, outline of a solution, and argument for the solution.

Although adult readers recognize that there is a likely constitutional challenge to her solution, they will concede that this thirteen-year-old writer develops an impressive argument for the rhetorical situation. For a first-draft essay, it is an exceptional achievement.

Untitled

Dear Mr. Steward,

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the recent change of policy at the mall that prohibits teenagers under the age of sixteen from being on the premises without their parents. This rule both unfairly punishes those who do not cause problems and deprives mall merchants of a valuable source of income-the teenager's dollar.

Perhaps a more effective solution, then, is one that benefits the merchants and the young customers, yet is still successful in removing the problems caused by rowdy teenagers. I believe the problem could be solved by issuing all teenagers who enter the mall photo identification cards similar in appearance to a driver's license. The cards would indicate name and birthdate, and underneath the personal information would be the numbers one through five. Each time an individual is found in violation of the rules of the mall, a hole would be punched through one of the numbers. Then, the date and a description would be penned in a designated area on the back of the card and the guilty party would lose mall priveleges for a previously specified amount of time.

Table 6

Achievement in Problem Solution

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students	Cumulative Percent	Description of Achievement
6 Exceptional Achievement	0.8	0.8	The student describes the problem fully and argues for its seriousness; argues convincingly for one or more solutions to a problem; reflects continual awareness of readers' objections and preferred alternative solutions.
5 Commendable Achievement	6.2	7.0	The student describes the problem adequately for intended readers and argues convincingly for at least one solution; reflects readers' concerns but without the continual reader awareness of the writer of a 6.
4 Adequate Achievement	20.8	27.8	The student describes the problem briefly and offers at least one relevant, moderately developed solution; may mention the reader in the beginning but usually does not mention the reader again until the conclusion; is more matter of fact and noticeably less convincing than the writer of a 5 or 6.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	38.4	66.2	The student identifies a problem and offers at least one minimally developed solution; may mention readers but usually does not accommodate them.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	25.3	91.2	The student mentions a problem and lists one or more solutions without arguing for them; usually does not mention readers.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	6.6	98.1	The student usually mentions a problem but may not identify one explicitly; either does not offer a solution or mentions one and does not argue for it or argues for it illogically; proposes a solution that may not seem appropriate for problem; shows little or no awareness of readers.
No Response	1.0	99.1	
Off Topic	0.9	100.0	

*This column does not total to 100 percent because of rounding.

This proposal has several advantages. The identification cards would be made quickly and easily as each teenager is admitted to the mall via a central door. Their photographs would be taken and developed by one machine, and applied to a card with personal information by another. The cost of this equipment and its operators would be far less than the price paid for damages caused by misbehavior.

A second advantage of this plan lies in the great ease with which record could be kept and entrance to the mall regulated. The information that is placed on each card issued would be stored in a computer and each time a hole is punched in a card the infraction and date would be entered into the computer as well. Thus, both the mall managers and the teenagers would know when five violations have been committed and mall priveleges lost. The computer's data would also prevent teenagers from trying to get new cards when theirs have been "filled".

Please consider my proposal, Mr. Steward. My friends and I hope to be purchasing goods at the mall again soon.

Score Point 5: Commendable Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 5

Feature (Coherence): 6

Conventions: 4

6.2 percent of the students achieved this score.

It has been fascinating to see how these eighth graders can put themselves wholeheartedly into the situations of the prompts. I am reminded of how important it is to provide real readers and have my students work on solving real problems. We certainly have enough problems to keep us busy all next year!

—Comment from a teacher who scored problem solution

Introductory Commentary:

This student writes an engaging letter to the student council, proposing a solution to the problems of new students. The writer shows a real sense of his readers and uses his own experience convincingly in his argument. Although not as strong or as polished as the "6" paper, this essay displays some commendable strengths.

Untitled

Dear Student Concil:

My name is Jeremy, a student at your school for over three years. Yesterday I saw your ad for suggestions for helping new students out with coming to a new school. I read this article with a great deal of concern. When I first came to this school I was very shy, and I was always "picked on". I had to make drastic changes to not be the "new kid", who didn't, "belong". So I slowly became more outgoing, and I didn't let other kids pick on me. Since people saw that I had guts, they admired me and became my friends. Now today, I have a great deal of friends and no problems whatsoever.

So you can see why I was very happy to see that the school wants to make it easier for the newcomers, so I wrote as soon as possible. I think I have a great solution! For each newcomer, you could assign an older person to give a very thorough and complete orientation. This way the new students would know were everything is on school grounds. There would be no wandering around or confusion. The older student would also have the responsibility of introducing the new student to some of the other students. Now to new students this is a great reishurement. This way they wouldn't get left-out or feel bad and lonely. I think these are two great solutions for a problem that could work, and it doesn't even cost anything! This way we could save the school money up for something educational! But the biggest sense of satisfaction you student concil members will know, is that new students in our school are having a great time here. This also, could promote the school so more students would come. So, please consider any offer as an alternative to making young, poor children be "hurt" by their peers.

Score Point 4: Adequate Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 4

Feature (Coherence): 5

Conventions: 5

20.8 percent of the students achieved this score.

I think the scoring session taught the value of teaching brainstorming and mapping. A clear, well-organized response can be very pedestrian. Brainstorming helps students find lively ideas. Organization with little content is deadly.

Kids need more practice in debating issues; they often don't know how to argue a point of view.

—Comments from teachers who scored problem solution

Introductory Commentary:

This writer begins rather abruptly by listing all the problems a new student might have and then systematically addresses each concern with a brief, underdeveloped solution. The writer's strength is organization. Although this paper is clearly "adequate," it could be much improved if the writer selected one or two solutions and developed sustained, convincing arguments for them. In order to be convincing, the writer would need to show a continual awareness of readers' possible objections and preferences. Far more than 45 minutes would be required to develop arguments for each of these solutions.

Untitled

I have noticed of late new students have some problems at this school. These include getting lost, getting the wrong or inappropriate elective, and being put in the wrong classes, In some cases a new kid enters a class that is way ahead of where his former class was. He is then made to skip important information about the subject.

It also leaves them out of school rewards. Like the trip to the waterslides for not once being cited. There really are some simple solutions for these problems, and I will try to put on paper my ideas.

As far as getting lost is concerned, I think that the solution is almost to easy. When a new student arrives, he should be given a diagram of the school. The office aide can mark in where and when his classes are.

As for being put in the wrong elective I think the students should have a little more say in the matter. If a new student asks for shop he should get shop. He should not get stuck in band. If there is no room in shop, he should be given a second choice. Out of these two, I'm sure he could be found an elective he would enjoy. Even if it wasn't his first choice.

Then there's being put in the wrong classes. For example: I know a student who at his old school had pre-alegebra. When he came here, they put him straight into algebra. He is struggling by with a D+ in that class. I think you should take a little more time with the student to plan his/her schedule.

Then there's the rewards for being good, or perfect attendance. When a student comes here in the second semester, he's inelligible from all of these. Just because he wasn't here. I think that our school should send for the students past records and if the meets the requirements, he can participate.

My final idea is to have a welcoming committee formed. This is so that the student can feel like a part of the school right away. It is also to help him meet friends and teachers both.

Score Point 3: Some Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 3

Feature (Coherence): 4

Conventions: 4

38.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

Most eighth graders can identify a problem but very few can present a solution and argue convincingly for it. We will focus on argumentation next year.

—Comment from a teacher who scored problem solution

Introductory Commentary:

After a shaky start, this essay manages an intelligent statement of a problem in its second paragraph. It does little more than restate the problem as the solution, however. The writer imagines other adolescents as her readers, but the writing task asked her to address parents with a solution for the problem of poor communication between adolescents and parents. Consequently, it is difficult to assess this student's rhetorical strategies for addressing adults about a complicated problem.

Untitled

Problems between parents and teenagers has been a situation that has lasted since America has been discovered. There seems to be problems between all the parents and teenagers of the world. This is due to the lack of communication.

Parents struggle with their children to try and keep them young. They don't want you to be out when it's near twilight, or spending to much time with your friends, instead of them. They don't seem to understand that you're near adulthood and you don't want to be caged in like a labratory rat.

Teenagers now a days want to have fun, not sit by their parents for the rest of their life. You need to have more freedom as you become older, as you become more mature.

Just sit down some day and try and discuss the problem you are having. Communication is the key here. Let them know how you feel, that you want to branch out, and that you need more time to yourself.

Try to make your parents understand that you aren't going to stay young forever. They all know that the teenage years are very difficult. They were once teenagers too! Just try and communicate a little more, show you care. Tell them how you feel and maybe they'll understand.

Score Point 2: Limited Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 2

Feature (Coherence): 6

Conventions: 3

25.3 percent of the students achieved this score.

Eighth graders need more instruction and practice in writing. They also need individual responses from teachers and small student groups.

—Comment from a teacher who scored problem solution

Introductory Commentary:

This student writes a polite, coherent letter to the president of the mall merchants' association stating the problem clearly. The writer then offers two skeletal suggestions but provides no argument for either one. With guided revision opportunities, such as work in a peer response group, this writer would undoubtedly be able to improve the rhetorical effectiveness of this letter.

Malls

Dear Mrs. Steward,

The owner of our mall has passed a new rule saying that children under 16 can not go in the mall without a parent. This rule has caused children to leave there place that that they hang out at. some of the children are causing trouble in other places because of this rule. The mall is a public store.

I believe there is a way to satisfy both the owner and the children. One way is to hire security gards to walk around the mall. Another way is to set a certain time when thoes children may come in the mall.

Thank you for sharing your time with me. I hope we can work something out to benefit both the owner and the children.

Yours Truly,

Score Point 1: Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 1

Feature (Coherence): 2

Conventions: 2

6.6 percent of the students achieved this score.

To do well with this type of writing, kids need to be shown what is expected and how to accomplish it.

I'm going to work on making sure my students address the problem, think imaginatively about solutions, and argue convincingly for their solutions.

—Comment from a teacher who scored problem solution

Introductory Commentary:

This student responds to a difficult writing task, asking him to define briefly the need for home energy conservation (the "problem" in this situation) and then to propose one or more solutions, using information from an elaborate cut-away profile of a house with conservation possibilities illustrated and annotated. To succeed, students had to categorize types of conservation (rather than list them individually) and then use the information to convince readers that home energy conservation was possible. This student is "on topic," but he barely samples the available information and does not satisfactorily define the problem or discuss the solution. With time for work with the ideas involved and for discussion with the teacher and classmates, this student could improve his understanding of how to write a convincing problem solution essay.

Untitled

Energy costs a lot to use in household aplliances. Energy can be wasted if play with energy charged stuff. It is really wasteful when I have a light for no reason expecially when it is day time. If you have energy from a cooler you put something in the cracks of the wall, and doors, windows. Energy has to be used sensebly. We can't oford to pay for energy don't really need.

Chapter 7

Writing Assessment: Report of Information

This past year I was able to bring my students much further than I'd thought possible because I'd seen the quality of writing at last year's CAP scoring session. Most students can go beyond one paragraph assignments to write real essays in which they report fully on a subject.

—Comment from a teacher who scored report of information

Writers of reports of information present themselves as authorities on a subject. They need to keep their focus on the purpose for writing, which is to convey their knowledge and understanding to readers whose primary motivation is learning about the subject.

Effective reports of information orient readers to the subject, present carefully selected details organized in a useful way, then close satisfactorily. The best reports go still further to express writers' involvement with their subjects and commitment to sharing their expertise.

Resnick's terminology for the key features involved in higher-order thinking suggests that writing reports of information requires nuanced judgment and application of multiple criteria in selecting the details and kinds of elaborations required to present information (see Chapter 2). Depending on the purpose for writing, writers must learn to select from a vast amount of data only those elements that will contribute to the needs of intended readers.

Report of information is explanatory writing. It involves the full range of writer's strategies for presenting information; anecdotal narration, process narration, description, illustration, definition, classification, and comparison/contrast. Because it has no inherent logic (like argument), it makes special demands on writers for organizing—for finding a workable plan to inform readers efficiently. The writer needs to consider how much the readers already know on the topic and at what rate and by what means new information can be introduced. Writers need to provide all the obvious cues readers require to stay on track as they process unfamiliar information—cues like forecasting and transitions.

In reporting information, writers are concerned primarily with informing rather than persuading readers to take action, justifying judgments or opinions, or presenting autobiographical disclosures. We find reports of information in textbooks, research reports, technical manuals, and newspapers and magazines. We also find them in letters and essays presenting information about familiar activities and places. Reporting information encompasses much of the reading and writing students will do in school and college and on the job.

Writing Tasks

In the April, 1988, assessment, students were assigned one of nine writing tasks within report of information. Each task required students to present school or community information to particular readers. For example, they were given such tasks as to describe their hometowns to friends of the same age group who were moving to the towns. Other tasks asked students to prepare reports for specific class assignments, such as a report on safety in

the science classroom. For a history class, students were asked to write a report about a recent invention for a sixth-grade booklet.

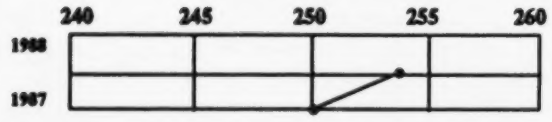
A future-oriented prompt asked students to report on an item to be included in a time capsule that would be opened by teenagers in the next century.

All tasks emphasized presenting a subject comprehensively and concretely in order to inform readers. Although the information writers needed came from personal experience, students were not directed to write autobiography, and they were not asked to narrate personally significant incidents. Although they wrote about favorite activities and classes, as in evaluation writing tasks, they were not encouraged to convince readers to accept the writer's judgment that the activities and classes were better than all others; instead, they were encouraged simply to describe the activities and classes.

Achievement in Reporting of Information

Table 7 summarizes the achievement of grade eight students in the writing of informative reports, while Figure 7 indicates the change in performance between 1987 and 1988. Fifty-two percent of students (those scoring 6, 5, or 4) have learned that to inform a reader about a subject, they must elaborate, exemplify, and describe, not just list main points or features. Because students were sharing information gained from a personal experience about familiar subjects inviting endless elaboration, essays scored 4, although revealing some effort to elaborate, were surprisingly brief. Only 16 percent of students (those scoring 5 or 6) seem to move readily from general to specific—from main ideas to elaborations. Readers need examples and concrete details. Without them, attention wanders and no learning is possible. Strategies of elaboration—narrating activities, listing steps in a process, defining, giving examples, providing visual details, comparing or contrasting, and making analogies—are familiar to students as readers and can be readily added to their writing repertoires.

Figure 7
Change in Achievement in Report of Information Using a Scale Score



Note: The scale score calibrates differences among various prompts, weighing such variables as the difficulty levels of the prompts.

Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary

Score Point 6: Exceptional Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 6

Feature (Support and Elaboration): 6

Conventions: 6

3.8 percent of the students achieved this score.

As I read, I learned a great deal about student writing—about what makes it strong. As a result, I believe I am better prepared to teach writing to my students. A big plus for me was meeting other teachers and sharing ideas and experiences.

Interventions at critical points in the writing process may be the key to fostering better writing.

—Comments from teachers who scored report of information

Introductory Commentary:

Contributing to a neighborhood guide for her area, this student presents information about her small town (Hollister) in an engaging, readable, reader-sensitive way. We never lose sight of her controlling idea, that Hollister is an interesting, attractive, bustling small town. The information is well organized and, most important, it is concrete and specific. She names and locates places precisely. She lists activities and options.

Like all the other six-point essays in this report, this one could certainly be improved after discussion by a small group of students or a conference with the student's English teacher. For a time-limited, first-draft essay, however, it exemplifies exceptional achievement.

Neighborhood Guide

In our town there are many interesting and exciting things to do. This little town is bustling with

Table 7

Achievement in Report of Information

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students	Cumulative Percent	Description of Achievement
6 Exceptional Achievement	3.8	3.8	The student presents substantial amounts of specific, concrete information which is focused and organized impressively; relies on a variety of strategies for presenting information; provides readers with a context for the subject; concludes in a satisfying way; reveals enthusiasm for the subject and authority in writing about it.
5 Commendable Achievement	16.3	20.1	The student presents specific information, although less than the writer of a 6, that is focused and well organized; relies on a variety of strategies for presenting information; begins and ends effectively; reveals his or her enthusiasm and authority.
4 Adequate Achievement	32.4	52.5	The student presents specific information, as much as a 5, but usually more general than specific and not as well organized as a 5 or 6; usually begins effectively but may end clumsily; reveals interest in the subject but reflects less authority than the writer of a 5 or 6.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	29.4	81.9	The student presents either limited information or adequate information poorly organized; usually relies more on general statements, opinion, or evaluation than on specific information.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	11.1	93.0	The student presents information that is brief and shakily organized, indicating that he or she has a very limited understanding of reporting information.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	4.1	97.1	The student presents little information and that is badly organized or even incoherent. Although the essay is on topic, it reveals little evidence that the student understands how to report information.
No Response	1.2	98.3	
Off Topic	1.7	100.0	

*This column does not total to 100 percent because of rounding.

activity from morning to night. There are hundreds of things to experience and see.

If you live near Mainstreet, there is a lovely park between Crocker Bank and Ludwig's. The park is clean, safe, and well maintained. It has a lush, green lawn that stretches the entire length of the block and is surrounded by a wall of well clipped London Plain Trees. You can go to this park and play ball, rollerskate, ride bicycles, or just stoll around the edge of the lawn.

If you prefer shopping to sports and picnics, all along Mainstreet are quaint shops and boutiques. The shops have everything from sewing materials to candy. Things here are inexpensive and very useful. There is also a mall out toward the end of Oak St. The mall has a large, well run Macy's, a hair salon, a candy shop, a movie theater, and many other useful shops.

If you favor games and fun, there is an arcade on Mill St. The arcade has hundreds of games and prizes. It is lots of fun, and you can meet many interesting people there. If you aren't into playing arcade games, outside is miniature golf. The "golf" course consists of eighteen holes and prizes for getting "holes in one." The miniature golf course is very challenging but fun at the same time. It is supposed to be the best maintained and most difficult miniature golf course in the county.

Last but not least is the stable on River Drive. The stable is called Mr. Oak's Horse Barn by many locals. The Horse Barn has fifteen horses that you can take lessons on or rent for the day. If you take lessons, you will be instructed by a knowledgable professional in basic or advanced horse care and riding. Should you rent a horse, you have the option of taking any one of the various bridle paths that wind up into the scenic Gavillian Mountains.

I hope you can use this guide to have many adventure filled days in lovely, little Hollister.

Score Point 5: Commendable Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 5

Feature (Support and Elaboration): 6

Conventions: 5

16.3 percent of the students achieved this score.

I believe the scoring guide allows teachers to look at the substance of the paper—the quality of thought and content—thus allowing the students to write from their experiences—specifically and confidently.

—Comment from a teacher who scored report of information

Introductory Commentary:

This writer aims to inform readers about a valued activity: running the 50-yard dash, the 100-yard dash, and the relay leg. The task did not require complete instructions but rather an introduction to the activity that would interest readers and perhaps entice them to inquire further. Throughout this essay, we hear a lively voice. The information is detailed but not tediously so for the purpose of interesting a reader in an unfamiliar sport. This writer has done a commendable job in just 45 minutes, even though the essay suffers from the attempt to impose a formula.

Untitled

Running in races is a thrilling, and challenging thing to do. There are all sorts of events which you can enter. I run the 100 yard dash, relay and 50 yard dash. There are many other events in competitive running, but these three topics are what I'm going to focus on.

Before you Decide to run you must know your ability. If you're a fast runner but can't run for a long period of time, then the 50 and 100 yard dash is for you. This also applies for the relay. Take note that before entering any competitive sport you must condition for it. Conditioning makes it easier for you to succeed, and make you familiar with that sport. Running daily is great for conditioning your muscles and build stability. Also before you do any sport that may stress your muscles, stretch out! If you don't you may tear a muscle, ligament, or create permanent injury. For a good run I suggest a good pair of running shoes. The Reebok running shoe or Nike is a good shoe for running. NOW. . . . Off to the races!

For the 100 and 50 yard dash, you should go at a real fast pace through-out the whole race. For the relay, you should have 4 team runners with you. You should put your fastest runners' in the 1st position and last position. The runner that's a good finisher should always go last or anchor. The OK runners should be put in the 2nd and 3rd positions. The first runner should always be a good starter. In the relay you are given a light, metal baton to pass to your team-mates.

When getting ready to "pass" the baton along, you should say "HIT" or "STICK" to alert the runner you're about to "Pass" the baton. You say

"Go" about 10 ft. before you reach your runner so he/she will have a head start, and build up speed as he/she runs on.

This is the basics of running the 50 and 100 yard dash.

Score Point 4: Adequate Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 4

Feature (Support and Elaboration): 4

Conventions: 5

32.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

Many students scored lower than they might have. I think they have not been exposed to what "6" reports feel, look, and sound like.

The main problem I saw in the students' writing was the tendency to list facts without elaborating or explaining so that readers could understand. Students need to see examples of elaboration, and they need to learn prewriting activities for elaborating their ideas.

—Comments from teachers who scored report of information

Introductory Commentary:

This writer, responding to the prompt to write a letter to a friend reporting on a favorite class, tells us a good deal about her English class, but without any sense of her reader. The details are given in a piecemeal fashion rather than in an organized way. As is true of many writers in the 4 range, an earnest tone indicates a writer willing to do what is expected. The writer likes to write. With the good teaching that seems to be going on in this English classroom, we can hope that this writer will quickly move to an understanding of how to organize a number of ideas effectively and of how to orient a report to a specific reader.

Untitled

My favorite class at Center is my English class. My teacher, Mrs. Johnson is a creative and interesting person. Everyday she tries to make up lesson plans that will make us want to learn.

To prepare us for this writing assessment Mrs. Johnson had us write stories. Then we seperated into groups. In these groups we read different papers. We then evaluated them. We also chose which paper in each pile we got was the best. We did this until there were no more papers.

Lately she has given us dittos and let us split up in pairs or threesomes and work.

The people in my class make it fun and interesting too. We have the silent-types, the loud types and we also have the kind of person who has to have his say in everything even if it has alaready been cleared up.

My class is made up of 7th an 8th graders. The only classes I have that are just 8th graders are social science and science.

English class is a place that I can just sit back and learn without having most of the problems I have with my other classes. In Englsih I can do what I like to do most, write.

A while back we had a term paper to do. It was a combined project for English and Social Science. It was fairly easy but I am glad it only comes once a year.

I guess my English class is just like yours. So I guess what I've written is the same stuff you see and do. I hope this has helped you see what a California English class is like.

Score Point 3: Some Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 3

Feature (Support and Elaboration): 3

Conventions: 3

29.4 percent of the students achieved this score.

We need to put even stronger emphasis on elaboration of main points. Many students neglect to discuss a topic fully.

Students need to organize information, include specific details, and give voice to their writing.

—Comments from teachers who scored report of information

Introductory Commentary:

This student wrote a serious paper in response to the prompt to write a report on safety in the science classroom for students new to the school. There is certainly some evidence of achievement; the student understands how to introduce the topic and make comments involving the intended reader throughout the paper. The writer does not, however, provide very much concrete information about how to avoid harm in science classes. With an opportunity to engage in some prewriting activities, such as clustering or mapping, this student would be able to

go beyond what is almost introductory and write a competent report.

Safe Science

Safe science is one of the most important things you need to know about before entering our school. Sense you will be entering into the eighth grade alot of new resposibilities will be placed on you, such as knowing how to work and handle yourself in the science lab. There are many new dangers you will encounter while you work here, for example there is many types of acids that can burn holes through your skin in less then three seconds. There are also many powder that when mixed with certain liquids can cause dangerous and sometimes even deadly fumes. While in the science room you will get to do many experiments and other types of lab work. When I was in science we got to work alot on our own. I think everyone who is entering this class will enjoy it because our teacher lets us really handle all the equipment. So, once again have fun enjoy, and be careful.

Score Point 2: Limited Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 2

Feature (Support and Elaboration): 2

Conventions: 2

11.1 percent of the students achieved this score.

We're making progress! It seemed that few students were unable to respond to the prompt. Many whose conventions scores were low displayed an ability to organize their thoughts on paper.

—Comment from a teacher who scored report of information

Introductory Commentary:

Writing to sixth graders to inform them about one important invention and to report on ways the invention affects everyone's lives, this writer focuses on the assembly line that produced the Model T Ford. Unfortunately, the focus wavers from the assembly line to the Model T, with little information provided about either. The writer fails to report on the effect of this invention on our lives other that to say, in the last line, "I wouldn't know want (sic) I would do if I didn't have a car."

Untitled

The model T was invented by Henery Ford. Ford also invented the assembly line. The assembly line was a system that made the Model T. One person put one piece of the car together. It was much faster. In one day Henery Ford produce hundreds of Model Ts.

The Model Ts were all the same. How come they were all the same because it was cheaper. How come Henery Ford built the model T was so people can by them. Other people before Henery Ford invented the car. But they asked for too much money for them. I wouldn't know want I would do if I didn't have a car.

Score Point 1: Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 1

Feature (Support and Elaboration): 1

Conventions: 4

4.1 percent of the students achieved this score.

I'm going to continue working on detail but make sure that my students take longer to organize. Then I want them to stop when they have nothing more to say.

—Comment from a teacher who scored report of information

Introductory Commentary:

Although this writer has adequate control of conventions, the writer has little sense of what it means to write a report of information. Much of the paper is a restatement of the prompt, which asks students to describe an object to be included in a time capsule that teenagers in the year 2088 will open. The writer confuses the reader, naming first a shirt then shifting to socks. This student could profit quickly from a carefully focused study of report of information, identifying useful strategies for his or her own use.

Untitled

Dear Teenagers of 2088,

My class has a time capsule and we are going to place it underground. The item that we have decided on was a shirt. The reason why we picked a shirt is because they can keep your feet warm.

The time capsule is a capsule that has a timer on it. In the year of 2088, some teenagers of 88 won't be alive or they will be 100 and something.

Some other school might be doing this but we don't know. We are going to bury the time capsule in a couple of months.

The time capsule is going to be dug up in the year of 2088 by teenagers. The capsule will have socks in it so they might smell.

So teenagers of 2088, please don't throw our socks away because we might want them back.

Sincerely,

Teenagers of 1988

Chapter 8

Writing Assessment: Story

It is clear that story writing must be taught, not just assigned. Both the rhetorical characteristics and the use of concrete language must be taught by example and through drafting and revising in carefully planned lessons.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Story, the only type of fiction being tested by the grade eight CAP writing assessment, is central to the experience of all of us and is especially appropriate to eighth-grade students. The place of fiction as literature to be enjoyed, read, and studied is secure in the English curriculum; the place of fiction as a type of writing to be taught is just as necessary. Story writing integrates elements of many of the other types of writing being taught and tested. Autobiographical incident, report gathering, problem solution, character portrayal in biographical sketch, and speculation are all involved in the art of crafting a story.

The writer of the successful story draws on personal experience as well as imagination to create a fictional situation in which the elements of setting, character, and incident comprise a coherent narrative structure. In terms of Resnick's key features of higher-order thinking (see Chapter 2), story writing ranks high. Manipulating all the elements of a short story tends to be complex; designing a plot often yields multiple solutions; story writing requires elaborations and judgments and certainly involves effortful self-regulation of the thinking process. Fiction writing, perhaps more than any other type, is nonalgorithmic: the path of action is not fully specified in advance.

Although storytelling is perhaps the most familiar of all forms of writing, it is also one of the most varied. Stories can be static or fast-paced, fantastic or realistic, suspenseful or flat. Stories may focus on character relationships or plot, rely heavily on setting or barely mention it, resolve a problem or leave the reader up in the air. The hallmark of the successful story is how well the writer engages and holds the reader's attention and interest in the actions of fictional characters in a fictional world.

Students like stories. They like to tell stories, watch stories, read stories. With careful guidance and focused time to plan, draft, share, and revise, they can also write engaging, effective stories.

Writing Tasks

In the April, 1988, statewide test, every sixth student wrote a story for one of five writing tasks. Some prompts had to do with situations involving personal relations, such as a character establishing a new friendship or a person who exhibits some kind of courage. Other prompts asked students to write stories about unexpected presents or to use a historical setting, such as the California Gold Rush, for a story. In each case, a very spare situation allowed for students to create a variety of stories in response to each writing prompt. The story prompts all mentioned readers, helping students in this artificial writing situation to imagine real people reading their stories.

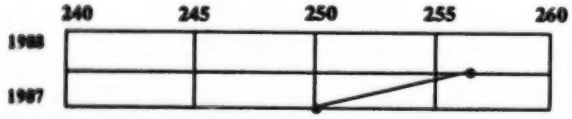
Achievement in Story

Table 8 summarizes the achievement of grade eight students in writing stories, while Figure 8 records the scale score. While only 8 percent wrote exemplary stories (scoring 5 or 6 in rhetorical effectiveness), a full third of the students scored at least adequate (4) or better. A sizeable number, some 6 percent, scored at the most minimal range.

A surprising number of papers, 4.6 percent, were scored off-topic. One of the reasons for such a large number of off-topic papers is that elementary school children grow up calling everything they write in school "stories." The distinction of the word story as fictional narrative is unfamiliar to many eighth graders. Although they are familiar with stories from reading, television, and movies, many students do not distinguish story as a genre. As a result, most of the papers labeled off-topic by the readers were, in fact, creditable essays about the writer's own ideas of friendship, for example, or reports about their recall of Gold Rush facts from their history class. The teachers who scored the papers, nearly all eighth-grade teachers, learned, to their surprise, that they had assumed that their students understood the distinctions among story, personal essay, and report as specific kinds of writing. Writing effective stories requires both extensive reading of fiction and careful teaching of the strategies of narration and characterization.

Figure 8

Change in Achievement in Story Using a Scale Score



Note: The scale score calibrates differences among various prompts, weighing such variables as the difficulty levels of the prompts.

Sample Essays, with Scores and Commentary

Score Point 6: Exceptional Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 6

Conventions: 6

.9 percent of the students achieved this score.

The best stories were, indeed, very, very good. The more we really analyzed the exemplary stories, the more amazed I became that a thirteen-year-old could write such a well-integrated story in 45 minutes.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Introductory Commentary:

This first-draft story about a hardened criminal's release from prison is exceptional. It represents the very best writing we could expect of an eighth grader on a forty-five minute test. The writer establishes the story's situation through description of the prison and the shifting point of view between Rupert, the prisoner, and John, the prison guard. These two central characters' opposite points of view are realized through effective dialogue and reflection. The guard rants and rages aloud while the prisoner remains silent, all his thoughts conveyed through interior monologue. The writer, with full control of syntax and conventions, gives readers the sounds and smells of prison life. Careful analysis shows masterful use of imagery that changes with the mood of the prisoner as we see the "cold light of the autumn sun" in the opening change to a "flaming autumn tree" at the end.

Untitled

This one day started just as hundreds before it had. The cold light of the autumn sun slipped through the small barred windows, and fell on the bleak prison walls. The clamor of the prisoners awakening drifted through the halls, and the pungent odor of cafeteria food penetrated every nook and cranny. Yet through this hububb, Rupert Jones slept soundly.

"Hey! Yo! Wake up in there!" A jailer beat upon the cell bars, rudely awakening Rupert. "It's time to get up, and if ya don't you ain't going nowhere."

The jailer was in an extremely good mood. He did not like his job or any of the prisoners. He expecially did not like the idea of letting criminals back onto the streets. This opposition to parole stemmed from the fact that his youngest daughter had been killed by a man in this very jail. Every day when John, for that was the jailer's name, walked by this man's cell he had a terrible longing to bash the man's face in. John had just passed the murderer's cell, and he was taking his anger and hatred out on Rupert.

"I can't believe that the authorities are lettin' you out of this rat hole. No kid of mine's goin out after dusk if you's out there. You nasty, conniving

Table 8

Achievement in Story

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students*	Cumulative Percent	Description of Achievement
6 Exceptional Achievement	0.9	0.9	The student writes a convincing story with a firmly established context, believable setting, and complex characters. The narrative stance is maintained with an effective balance between dramatized incidents and summarized action. Narrative strategies, dialogue, sensory detail, and concrete language are used to achieve an overall balance and stylistic unity.
5 Commendable Achievement	8.0	8.9	The student writes a story with a well-established context, believable setting, and characters. Strategies for advancing the story and for developing characters contribute to an effective, well-integrated story. The ending may not seem as inevitable as in a 6 story and word choice not as imaginative.
4 Adequate Achievement	23.7	32.6	The writer generally holds readers' interest through a series of events or through character change. The ending of a 4 story may seem hurried or contrived. Writers may have trouble focusing on central incidents and may summarize too much of the story.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	33.6	66.2	The writer often has a definite plot in mind but neglects to develop some aspect of the story—context, characterization, effective pacing. Word choice tends to be pedestrian and sentence patterns monotonous. There may be shifts in point of view.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	21.7	87.9	The writer presents minimal context for the story, which often lacks conflict or tension. Characters may be named but are not developed. Word choice is flat and sentence patterns simple and repetitive. The writer makes little use of detail or dialogue.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	6.4	94.3	The writer has difficulty determining a point of view. The story is usually confusing, with characters completely undeveloped. The story may just stop without any resolution. Vocabulary and sentence patterns are either simplistic or garbled.
No Response	1.2	95.5	
Off Topic	4.6	100.1	

*This column does not total to 100 percent because of rounding.

scum, you's just a waiting to get out there and hurt someone. The law system in this country is goin downhill if they let scum like you back on the streets." Having said his say, John turned on his heel, and stomped back down the hall.

But John's criticism's had fallen on empty ears. Many years ago, Rupert had learned to tune out someone who was talking, and he utilized this power whenver it was necessary. Instead of thinking of the jailer's harsh words, Rupert was day dreaming about what he would do as soon as he was released from the prison. He was just imagining himself taking a huge bit out of a juicy, delicious hamburger, when his reverie was shattered by the clanking of the jailer's keys in the cell doors lock. Rupert slowly stood up, and meandered down the hall to the cafeteria.

Rupert was an incredibly large man. He was not at all obese, but he was big boned, and he stood at 6'5. His face showed a hard and weathered look that came from ten years in jail. He was tough and seemingly mean, and he was disliked by all of his fellow criminals.

As Rupert masticated his breakfast he hardly noticed the gooey substance that he was shoveling into his mouth. He was once again caught up in his dream about the outside world. After ten years of jail for robbing a bank, Rupert knew that he was going to go straight and enjoy life for what it was.

After breakfast Rupert went back to his cell. Each minute seemed like hours. Finally, exactly at noon, the jailer's keys once again clanked in his lock. But this was the very last time he would hear that sound.

As he was escorted out of the jail, Rupert looked around himself in untarnished ecstacy. Then, right outside the gate someone rushed to meet him. It was his mother, Alycia Jones. He grabbed her in a giant bear hug, lifting her right off the ground. And then, the hard and weathered face broke. Rupert stood there under a flowing autumn tree, hugging his mother with tears rolling down his face.

Score Point 5: Commendable Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 5

Conventions: 5

8.0 percent of students achieved this score.

I would love to get hold of some of these kids and work with their writing. I can just see where they are going when they get control of their natural love of language.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Introductory Commentary:

Making up a story about the Gold Rush, this talented writer creates a vivid situation, relying on rich sensory language, similes, and accumulation of small details. He very effectively contrasts the quiet before the "rush" with the clamor during it. The pace is quick and even, but the characterization of Jeb is not strong, and the climax (Jeb's falling from his horse) and conclusion seem rushed. This writer has a flair for description; with a teacher who is careful not to dampen the natural talent, this student will soon gain the sense of balance that is needed for a truly exceptional writer.

Untitled

The sun shined brightly down upon the barren grass lands through a cloudless sky, heating the country up like a pan of meat over a sizzling fire. It was about high noon and all of the land was basicly deserted, for not many natural inhabitants wanted to be out and running about in such weather. Suddenly, a faint sound of trampling horses could be heard. Although the sound was distant, it slowly grew into a sound that could be described as the same as an eruption of a volcanoe. Prairie dogs shoved their heads up through their holes to inquire about the racket. Foxes crawled out of their dens. Birds peeped out of their grassy nests, and then, like a monsterous tornado out of a demon filled sky, they came. Hundreds of thousands of men riding horseback, plowing like mad men over the dry, dusty plains. Wagons, carts, and any kind of trailers of the sort filled with digging tools, gold pans, and living supplies came flying disasterously after the horses.

Jeb held on as best as his little body, which was now of the age of 36, could. He had been riding like this for nearly 4 hours and it was finally starting to take toll on the lower part of his body, but that really didn't matter to him now. No matter what he was going to get to Mariposa, even if it took him another 24 hours of riding similar to what it was like now. They had told him back in Virginia City that a little man like himself would stand no chance at claiming some of the mounds of gold that lay over in the rich filled lands of Mariposa; but he was very determined to prove that he could make it possible and return with a fortune. Now he was starting to have second thoughts. The group in which he was riding with presently held so many gold hungry men that he was sure half of them would kill to stake a

claim, but he was still going to get rich and return to Virginia with something to be proud of.

Six more hours of riding passed when the stampede finally started nearing the digging sites, and when they finally came into sight of the desperate fortune seekers, not one of them slowed down, with a last great surge of speed and energy, the men practically flew off their over weary steeds and staked themselves a claim upon the sandy sides of a muddy creek.

Jeb landed hard upon the bank, causing pain to surge through his left shoulder. This slowed him down some, but in the end he managed to obtain a small plot of land in which he began to seek his future fortune.

Score Point 4: Adequate Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 4

Conventions: 4

23.7 percent of students achieved this score.

I have learned how important pacing is to a story. Students need to learn how to balance all the elements. Next year I am going to look at pacing in stories we read as well as work on it in the stories my students write.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Introductory Commentary:

This story about a boy who had a reputation as a quitter in sports has some very strong features. Like so many of the stories marked adequate, however, on balance, it comes up short. It begins very promisingly with sentences such as "As the ball was thrown he noticed the sun beating down and how hot it was. He watched the ball coming." The second half of the story, in contrast to the first, seems rushed. The motivation for Greg's change at the end is not supported. With time for revision, this writer could undoubtedly bring this story into better balance so that the ending matched the effectiveness of the beginning.

The Quitter

One day Greg went down to the ball field to play some baseball with his friends. But as he strolled throught the long grass he found that he didn't want to play. But the day before he did promise. So he walked on slowly to the ballfield. Greg was a little late at the ball park and was furious when he was picked last.

Greg slowly walked over to his team. Sam the coach, said, "Well hotshot I guess you are up first." Then slowly a smile crept over his face. He was acutally going to be first. Greg walked up to the plate put the bat on his shoulder and waited. As the ball was thrown he noticed the sun beating down on his face and how hot it was. He watched the ball coming, coming. He swung. . . ."Strike 1", yelled the umpire.

Greg was amazed he had acutally missed. This time he was determined to hit the ball. He lifted the bat to his shoulder again. He watched the ball flowing towards him. He closed his eyes and swung. . . ."Strike 2" cried the umpire again. Sweat began to roll down his face. If he missed this time he would be out.

He slowly raised his bat to his shoulder. "Oh please God let me hit this ball," cried Greg. The pitcher threw the ball. Greg knew he would miss it again. The ball came closer he prayed with all his heart. He swung with ease. . . .Crack the ball flew. He dashed for first base, straight ahead. He looked up the ball was being thrown. He knew he had to dive. He dove wondering if he would make it. He felt his foot touch the plate. As the dust finally cleared he was laying on the ground panting. The boy who stood above him had the ball and was also sweating.

"Had I made it or what," thought Greg.

As if the answer to his question the umpire cried "Your out."

"I quit," cried Greg after him as he ran home. He quit every time he was out for weeks to come. finally the other boys wouldn't let him play with them anymore.

Greg was upset after a few weeks and decided he wouldn't quit anymore. He went down to the ball park noticing how blue the sky was. But when he got there and stood in line nobody picked him. "Let me play, please," cried Greg. "I won't quit again, I promise."

"Oh all right," cried Sam. "But this is your last chance to play. If you quit you will never play again."

Greg walked up to the plate anxious to hit the ball. But poor Greg struck out at home. To everybody's amazement Greg did not quit. For the rest of the day the boys waited for him to quit. But Greg never quit once. In fact he never hit the ball in the whole game. From that day on Greg never quit a game he was playing.

Score Point 3: Some Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 3

Conventions: 3

33.6 percent of students achieved this score.

Believability is important in stories. It is hard for some students to make the distinction between good fantasy, which is believable even if impossible, and unbelievable realism.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Introductory Commentary:

This story about a surfer is typical of the kind of story many eighth graders write. The main character, Jon, is a stereotyped surfer with "his long blonde hair, his blue eyes, and especially his nice tan buff glaring body." This student understands all the elements that make up stories. He has a chronologically developed plot, a lot of description, a climax, and a conclusion. Unfortunately, the conclusion, which is merely summarized rather than dramatized, is totally unbelievable. There is, however, with an opportunity for peer response and revision, promise for this student's writing.

Untitled

One time there was this guy named Jon and all he cared about was surfing, girls, and Captain Crunch cereal. Jon would surf all the time. He lived in Carlsbad, California, in a beach house. Some people would say that he was the best surfer on the coast, but some would say he was the best surfer in the world and should become a pro surfer.

Jon's daily schedule was very easy and laid back it went like this. First he would get up eat about four bowls of Captain Crunch, kiss his mom good-buy and head for school. At school he was admired by all the girls because of his long blonde hair, his blue eyes, an especially his nice tan buff glaring body. After school which was over at 2:00 P.M. he would head for the beach. At the beach everyone looked at him like he was some kind of surf god, which in a way he was by the way he surfed.

One day Jon went out surfing on a typical saturday morning. The waves were absolutely perfect. They were about 7ft. in size and had the majorly perfect shape. Of course Jon paddled out to the line-up right when he got there. He had been surfing for about an hour now and had a big crowd watching him which was normal. All of a sudden there was about a 10ft. set rolling in, Jon saw it and of course paddled for the first wave of the set. He dropped in and stalled to try and get barreled on this monster wave. He did get barreled but the wave closed out on him and he was drilled right into the reef. The life guard had to go out and get him. When the life guard brought him in he had a huge cut up his whole leg. This day there was sponsers there watching him to see if they should sponser him to go pro. It turned out they would.

During this time of the year the ocean was pretty polluted with poisons. Jon's leg became really infected and the doctors said they would have to amputate his leg. Jon was very mad because he wanted to become a pro surfer. So Jon didn't have a leg anymore and was very tict off he couldn't go pro.

One day one of his friends dad was a doctor and had made a waterproof mechanical leg for Jon. Jon loved the idea so he tried it the leg out. It turned out it worked just like a real leg and he surfed just as good as he used to. Jon thanked this doctor very much for giving him a second chance and enabling him to become his dream, a professional surfer.

Score Point 2: Limited Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 2

Conventions: 2

21.7 percent of students achieved this score.

I need to write my own stories with students so that I can relate to the difficulties that accompany writing stories.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Introductory Commentary:

This student, in writing a story with the Gold Rush setting, falls into the common student error of trying to write an entire movie script in two pages. Here the student summarizes an elaborate plot, giving us only brief glimpses into specific action. The setting is not developed, and the main character, even though named, remains one-dimensional. This student needs to learn how to focus on one incident and develop it with rich details. He or she already has a strong sense of drama.

Untitled

When the California Gold Rush started in 1850 a man named Hermon C. Fresh went to California to try to get enough gold to by a farm. He left on a Sunday after church. Hermon's family wished him

luck, said good bye, and gave him hugs and kisses. Hermon arrived in California by Saturday.

Hermon was not welcomed to alot of the minds, so he decided to start digging his own. A week later Hermon had a under ground mind about as biggest a lake. Hermon still didn't find any gold. Hermon quit looking for gold and went to get some fresh air. When he got ouside Hermon found he was surrounded by some mind robbers. There were 5 that he could see, but he new there were more behind the trees. One of the robbers took Hermon in the cave and tied him up and went out side and threw a peace of dinamit in and blew up the cave with Hermon in it. Hermon was lucky the door to the cave was the only part that blew up. What the robbers didn't know was they left the tools with Hermon. Hermon crawled to his pick and cut the ropes. Hermon got his pick and started to brack the rocks in the entrance. When Hermon got out he said "Revange".

Hermon walked to the nerest town and bought a gun and bullets. Then He went to a Saloon and saw the robbers who left him to die. He went over to them and shot all of them in the back and killed them. Then the sharif walked in and saw 5 dead guys and took hermons gun and said I'm gonna hang you in 24 hours. That night Hermon couldn't sleep. The next morning Hermon was brought up on a plat form and Hung.

Score Point 1: Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Rhetorical Effectiveness: 1

Conventions: 1

6.4 percent of students achieved this score.

Even in the most jumbled stories, I can see the possibilities for helping students improve.

—Comment from a teacher who scored stories

Introductory Commentary:

This student, who was asked to write a story about someone who shows courage in a specific situation, does write about a character who shows courage in standing up for a "nerd." The story is so confusing and unfocused, however, that it is extremely difficult to follow. The characters are only named, not developed; and both situation and context are muddled. Unlike many writers of "1" papers, this student is clearly not fearful about writing. It would be helpful for this student to hear his or her own story read aloud, with opportunities for clarification and revision in a small response group.

Untitled

I new a boy that had a lot of courage and he would do about anything. Because he wasn't scared. I was walking on the side walk one day and I saw a dog run in front of this car the boy ran in front of the car and save the dog. I couldn't believe it.

And the kid that had a lot of courage, I think you would want the boy and his name is John. I was walking home and I saw him walking to. So I asked his name and he said John, then I asked him were do you get all this courage from? And he said that he get it from his parents. I said that pretty neat then he said that sometimes he didn't have all their courage and I asked him why? He said that he didn't know. so we started walking home then I went to bed. And the next day I woke up and went to school, and I John again protecting a nerd at lunch time. Some kid trip the nerd and the kid kick him then they all started fighting. So John stop the fight and John said to pick on somebody that your size. So the kid threw a punch at John and he blocked it and punch him back. They stop the fight, then asked John if he was all right and he said no prob. They didn't' get in trouble because we stop it just in time before the principle walked in were we were at. So we went outside and john took nerd outside with us. We got into a fight over that nerd he stuck up for that kid. He was going to get messed up by the gang. I walked away and I never saw him after that. He was a jerk anyway.

Chapter 9

Summary of Writing Achievement

This chapter summarizes the results of California's second statewide direct writing assessment for grade eight. The assessment was designed by a team of outstanding classroom English teachers who have served as members of the CAP Writing Development Team. Each of 271,168 students wrote an essay in response to one of 45 prompts representing six types of writing. Nearly all students who took the test were able to comprehend the writing tasks and respond to the topic. At six regional scoring sites, all essays were scored in six days by 384 teachers who considered the scoring sessions a valuable opportunity to learn more about the teaching of writing. (Their comments appear in chapters 2 through 8.)

California's writing assessment establishes high academic standards that reflect goals set out in the *English–Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, adopted by the California State Board of Education in 1986. To do well on the test, students must (1) think critically and write intelligently in a wide range of situations; (2) report information clearly; (3) present memories and observations vividly; (4) argue convincingly about ideas and problems; and (5) write effectively about literature. The purpose of the assessment is to monitor improvement or decline in writing achievement.

The following six types of writing were assessed: autobiographical incident (narrating a personal experience); report of information (explaining personal knowledge about school, community, or hobbies); problem solution (arguing for a proposed solution to a personal, school, or community problem); evaluation (making and justifying a judgment of a work of literature, television program, consumer product, or type of music); firsthand biography (presenting a familiar person); and story (creating a fictional narrative). In 1989, students will also write essays speculating about causes or effects (arguing for proposed causes or effects of phenomena or events) and observations (presenting remembered observations of people, places, and events). Together, these eight types of writing require wide-range thinking and writing strategies.

Major Findings

- California's grade eight students improved in the four types of writing assessed in both 1987 and 1988. From a starting point of 250 in 1987, the statewide score for writing rose to 256.
- In 1988 most students wrote adequate or marginally adequate essays (levels 3 and 4: 62 percent); a small percentage of students wrote impressively (levels 5 and 6: 12 percent); and a larger percentage of students wrote poorly (levels 1 and 2: 22 percent).
- In 1988 grade eight students seemed most competent at reporting information (52 percent scored 4 or higher); less competent at autobiographical and firsthand biography (40 and 42 percent scored 4 or higher); noticeably less competent at story (33 percent scored 4 or higher); and markedly less skilled at the two kinds of persuasive writing in this assessment—arguing for solutions to solve problems and to support their judgments (only 28 and 27 percent scored 4 or higher).

- Grade eight students have better control of conventions than of rhetorical strategies. For example, in writing evaluations, while only 27 percent scored 4 or higher for rhetorical effectiveness, fully 45 percent scored 4 or higher for conventions. For every type of writing assessed, students scored higher in conventions than in composing (rhetorical effectiveness).

This chapter presents a summary of the results from the grade eight assessment for all scores and all types of writing, with interpretations and discussion provided by the members of the English-Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee. It begins with a comparison of achievement in different types of writing (Table 9-1) and continues with a comparison of achievement in feature scores (Table 9-2) and a report of achievement in conventions for each type of writing (Table 9-3). The information is synthesized in Table 9-4, which summarizes the weighted average of the percentages of all scores. These achievement levels are described, and implications are then discussed in the context of the probable writing and learning demands of high school. Chapter 10 presents the Committee's recommendations drawn from the statewide results.

Comparisons of Achievement in Different Types of Writing

Do California's grade eight students write as well in one type of writing as in another? Table 9-4, which brings together the results for achievement in rhetorical effectiveness reported separately in chapters 3 through 8, indicates that students' achievement is better for some types of writing than for others.

The tables in this chapter present only 1988 statewide average percentages. Because more prompts and different kinds of prompts were added to the 1988 assessment, 1987 and 1988 percentages cannot be directly compared. Instead, comparisons are offered in this chapter's figures, which present scaled scores derived from a sophisticated statistical analysis that takes account of expected variations in prompt difficulty and scoring reliabilities. Statewide scaled scores were set at 250 for 1987, the grade eight writing assessment's first year. Although student achievement varies with each type of writing, each type of writing has been statistically equated to 250 for monitoring changes in achievement over the years. Monitoring change at school sites is CAP's chief measurement objective.

Examining the 1988 statewide average percentages in Table 9-1, we can see that grade eight students seem most competent in reporting information, less competent in writing autobiographical incidents and firsthand biographies, even less competent at story, and notably less competent at arguing for solutions to solve problems and supporting their judgments in evaluations.

Students are clearly struggling with the two forms of argument in this assessment, problem solution and evaluation. Fewer than 1 percent scored 6, and only 7 percent scored at least a 5 in these important writing situations. Sixty to 65 percent of students scored no higher than 3. Problem solution requires students to describe a problem and argue convincingly for a solution. Students must anticipate their readers' objections and consider alternative solutions their readers may favor. Evaluation requires careful analysis of the subject being examined and confident use of evidence from it to support the writer's judgment.

Students' personal and fictional writing, though stronger than their argumentative writing, lags far behind their writing to convey information. It may be that teachers are assigning autobiographical incident, firsthand biography, and stories only casually, without benefit of the criteria and strategies identified in the CAP rhetorical effectiveness scoring guides for these types of writing.

Although students perform relatively poorly in some types of writing, statewide achievement is up in 1988 for all four types of writing assessed in both 1987 and 1988 (see figure 9-1). From a base of 250 in 1987, achievement rose to 258 in autobiographical incident, 255 in evaluation, 260 in problem solution, and 254 in report of information. Although incrementally slight, these scaled-score rises are very encouraging.

Figure 9-1

Comparisons of Achievement in Rhetorical Effectiveness for Four Types of Writing Assessed in Both 1987 and 1988

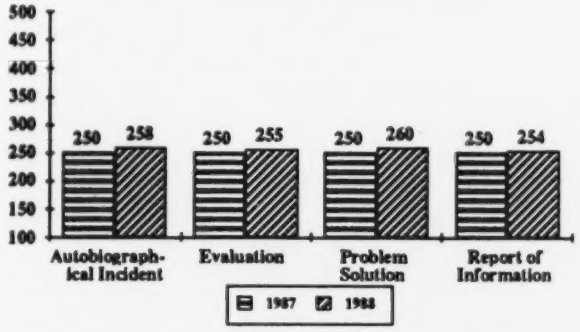


Table 9-1

Percents of California Eighth Grade Students Achieving at Rhetorical Effectiveness Score Points in Six Types of Writing

	Score Point							
	Exceptional	Commendable	Adequate	Some Evidence of Achievement	Limited Evidence of Achievement	Minimal Evidence of Achievement	No Response	Off Topic
	6	5	4	3	2	1		
Autobiographical Incident	1.7	9.5	28.6	36.0	16.4	3.4	1.1	3.4
Evaluation	0.4	6.1	20.5	36.3	27.9	6.4	1.3	3.4
Firsthand Biography	1.2	9.4	31.5	40.2	13.7	2.5	1.2	0.3
Story	0.9	8.0	23.7	33.6	21.7	6.4	1.2	4.6
Problem Solution	0.8	6.2	20.8	38.4	25.3	6.6	1.0	0.9
Report of Information	3.8	16.3	32.4	29.4	11.1	4.1	1.2	1.7

Comparisons of Achievement in Feature Scores

The second score assigned to every student paper was a feature score. Feature scoring guides were designed to provide further information by addressing additional characteristics in the student writing, such as elaboration, coherence, and style. Coherence was scored in autobiographical incident, problem solution, and evaluation; elaboration in report of information; and style in firsthand biography. (No 1988 feature score will be reported for story.) In every case the feature scoring guides were tailored to the particular type of writing being assessed so that although coherence was assessed within three types of writing, the coherence scoring guides were designed to reflect the special characteristics of coherence in a given type of writing. Table 9-2 presents the percents of California grade eight students achieving at each of the six feature score points in the five types of writing.

This table reveals that essays were most coherent in autobiographical incident and more coherent in problem solution than in evaluation. It may have been easier for students to achieve coherence in autobiographical incident than in persuasive writing because of their greater familiarity with narrative rhetorical structures present in stories and novels than with the structures present in argument. Feature scores were highest for elaboration in report of information and for style in firsthand biography.

The 1987-1988 comparisons in Figure 9-2 reveal that achievement in coherence rose in autobiographical incident, evaluation, and problem solution, while achievement in elaboration dropped slightly in report of information.

Achievement in Conventions

Table 9-3 reports the results of scoring essays for control of conventions. Table 9-3 indicates that California grade eight students have much better control of conventions (usage, spelling, and punctuation) than of composing strategies. For example,

Table 9-2

Percents of California Eighth Grade Students Achieving at Feature Score Points in Five Types of Writing

Feature	Score Point 6	5	4	3	2	1	No Response	Off Topic
Coherence (Autobiographical Incident)	2.3	9.9	28.4	35.0	16.7	3.2	x	x
Coherence (Evaluation)	1.3	6.9	25.7	36.9	21.6	5.0	x	x
Coherence (Problem Solution)	1.4	8.8	28.3	36.5	19.2	4.0	x	x
Elaboration (Report of Information)	4.5	13.6	28.0	36.1	12.7	2.2	x	x
Style (Firsthand Biography)	2.1	11.1	34.5	36.4	12.6	1.8	1.2	0.3

Note: No feature scores are being reported for story in 1988.

in writing evaluations, only 27 percent scored 4 or higher for rhetorical effectiveness, while 45 percent scored 4 or higher for conventions. For every type of writing assessed, students scored higher in conventions than in rhetorical effectiveness. Members of the committee were not displeased with the results for conventions, given that the papers reflected first-draft writing on a timed test.

From 1987 to 1988, achievement in conventions rose in all types of writing except problem solution (see Figure 9-3).

Statewide Average Achievement Levels

Table 9-4 reports statewide average scores, combining rhetorical effectiveness, feature, and conventions scores from all six types of writing. Within each type of writing, its three separate scorings were weighted as follows: rhetorical effectiveness (60 percent); feature score (25 percent); and conventions (15 percent). The third column in Table 9-4, "General Performance Description," describes in a very general way what a hypothetical student can do at achievement levels 1 through 6.

Members of the English-Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee observed from Table 9-4 that most students write adequately or marginally adequate essays (levels 3 and 4: 62 percent). A small percentage of students write impressively (levels 5 and 6: 12 percent). More students (too many, in the opinion of the committee) write poorly (levels 1 and 2: 22 percent) than impressively.

Very few California grade eight students write well enough to meet the high standards of the state's new achievement test in writing—standards implied in California's 1987 *English–Language Arts Framework*. Only 2 percent met the highest standards, and no more than 12 percent perform beyond a level that can be considered acceptable or adequate. High-performing students who write at levels 5 or 6 probably fully understand typical school and real-world writing situations like those posed by this test; they can vividly retell personal experience, create imaginative fictional stories, justify an evaluation, argue convincingly for the solution to a problem, or report information comprehensively and understandably. They control a wide range of thinking and writing strategies that enable them to achieve their purposes for particular readers. Their writing is developed, coherent, and nearly error-free. They know how to engage readers and hold their attention. They write with authority and confidence that inspire readers' trust. (Examples of essays represent-

ing all of Table 9-4's average achievement levels are included in chapters 3 through 8.)

Students who write at achievement level 4 know how to respond to a wide range of writing situations. They write coherently and with few errors and seem aware of their readers. They do not, however, develop scenes, points, or arguments as fully as do writers at achievement levels 5 and 6. Their writing often lacks controlling focus and the kind of commitment, energy, or liveliness that writing teachers call "voice." Still, given the high standards of this writing assessment, level 4 represents solid writing achievement. Students who can step up to this plateau are ready for the refinements that can lead them still higher. Forty percent of California's eighth graders achieve at least level 4.

At achievement level 3, students are poised for substantial writing development. They recognize and respond appropriately to the six writing situations in the 1988 test, but their writing reveals a limited range of thinking-in-writing strategies. They are unlikely, for example, to include specific evidence from a novel or movie to support an evaluation of it or to anticipate readers' objections to a proposed solution to a problem or to vivify a remembered scene with concrete visual details. Although their essays are readable, level 3 writers cannot consistently maintain coherence, and they make frequent errors. Because students writing at this level can readily improve their writing, teachers working with them will be able to observe noticeable improvement. Nearly three-fourths of California's eighth graders already achieve at least at level 3.

Students writing at level 2 (18 percent) and at level 1 (4 percent) cannot write very much (nearly always less than a page in 45 minutes of writing time). They cannot maintain coherence, and they make many errors. They recognize the writing situation and can produce a few sentences on topic, but they have few if any thinking/writing strategies for developing their ideas. The committee expressed concern that many students who do not write well are those who are tracked into skill-and-drill curricula in which bland dittos and work sheets substitute for effective writing instruction.

Context for the Achievement Results in Table 9-4

The CAP writing assessment is a full-range achievement test that challenges the very best writers and realistically evaluates the writing of all of those tested. The results provide information about how well teachers in California junior high schools and middle schools enable students to realize their intellectual potential and prepare them for continued achievement in high school. The CAP test also provides a direct performance assessment of composing abilities that are fundamental to the goals of California's *English–Language Arts Framework*, which are to prepare all students to:

- Function as informed and effective citizens in our democratic society.
- Function effectively in the world of work.
- Realize personal fulfillment.

The curriculum reform movement in California's schools sets higher standards of achievement for all students. It is commonly agreed that the reform efforts cannot come to fruition unless achievement in reading, writing, listening, speaking—the essential literacy activities—can be enhanced for all students. Reflecting current views of language, learning, and literacy, new publications from the California State Department of Education

Figure 9-2

Comparisons of Achievement in Writing Features for Four Types of Writing Assessed in Both 1987 and 1988.

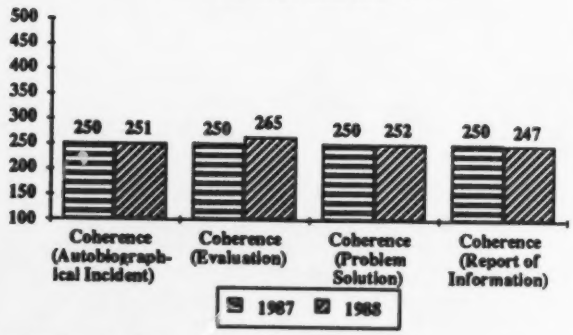


Figure 9-3

Comparisons of Achievement in Conventions for Four Types of Writing Assessed in Both 1987 and 1988

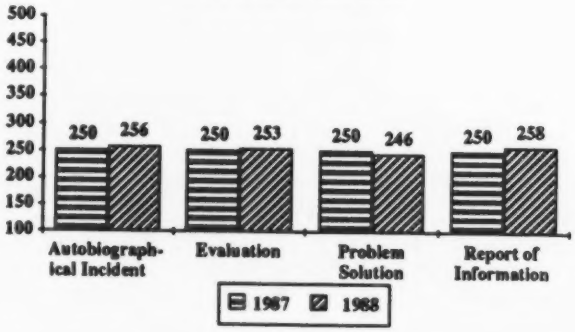


Table 9-3

Percents of California Eighth Grade Students Achieving at Conventions Score Points in Six Types of Writing

	Score Point							
	6	5	4	3	2	1	No Response	Off Topic
Autobiographical Incident	3.4	14.2	29.1	30.1	15.7	3.1	1.1	3.4
Evaluation	1.7	8.5	34.4	32.2	15.9	4.6	1.3	1.3
Firsthand Biography	6.6	20.0	33.8	25.1	10.4	2.1	1.2	0.3
Story	4.3	16.6	28.5	27.8	13.5	3.5	1.2	4.6
Problem Solution	1.5	11.3	34.0	33.3	14.7	3.2	1.0	0.9
Report of Information	6.5	22.5	33.3	23.3	9.3	2.2	1.2	4.6

detail the curricula and instructional requirements for fuller achievement in reading and writing for all California students (*English–Language Arts Framework, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve; English–Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight; Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve; Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight;* and *Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve).* Together, these publications present a vision of lively, challenging, and effective English-language arts programs. By emphasizing comprehensive writing programs and close reading of valued works of literature, the new programs set higher expectations for all students—expectations with widespread support from parents and from teachers. The CAP writing assessment surveys how well schools and students are meeting the higher expectations.

Strengthened middle school and junior high school English-language arts programs will make new demands of students, as will the high school English programs toward which students are headed. In California's high schools, where there is a new emphasis on higher-order thinking strategies, students will be writing more and longer pieces on all subjects. The framework notes that "the relationship between writing and human thought, basic to all disciplines, becomes the province of all teachers, who become helpers in the teaching of writing across the disciplines." To meet the writing demands of high school, junior high school, and middle school, students will need to be able to write well in a wide range of situations, many of which arise from new learning and from assigned reading. Continuing growth in cultural literacy during the high school years requires critical thinking and writing, particularly in response to the ideas and values encountered in literature-centered English classes.

The increased thinking and writing demands of high school will be brought into even better focus as new science and history–social science curriculum frameworks developed by the Department of Education begin to influence school programs. The new grade twelve CAP writing assessment also contributes to higher standards and to higher expectations of all students. Designed much like the grade eight test, the new grade twelve test assesses a wide range of argumentative writing requiring interpretation, judgment, speculation, careful use of evidence, and sensitivity to readers' knowledge and values. Students will be asked to write about works of

literature read in their English classes as well as about unfamiliar brief texts presented in the assessment.

The high school cross-curricula writing requirements discussed previously might seem exaggerated if it were still possible to consider writing merely a way of reporting what one has learned rather than a way to learn and a significant contributor to personal and intellectual development. New views of language, and of written language in particular, give writing a central, essential role in learning, not a peripheral role. Judith Langer and Arthur Applebee (*How Writing Shapes Thinking*) point out that writing is "a major vehicle for conceptual learning in all the academic disciplines." They conclude that "written language does indeed make a contribution to content learning, and it can support the more complex kind of reasoning that is increasingly necessary for successful performance in our complex technological and information-based culture."

Although grade eight students are a few years away from parenthood, voting, citizenship, career, or college, it is possible to conjecture about how well their current level of writing achievement prepares them for these inevitable roles. It would be a grave mistake to underestimate the importance of writing to all these roles. Even more than in high school, students in college are known to their instructors largely through their writing. To succeed in college, students must know how to use writing for learning and be able to write confidently in various academic writing situations. Their writing achievement will determine to a large extent whether they remain in college. It may even influence their decision to apply for readmission to college. Only students who write adequately or better have access to the full range of career choices and to requisite advanced training. Writing contributes to active, responsible citizenship. Students who cannot write adequately may be unable to ensure their rights and privileges, participate fully in community organizations or in action groups, adopt leadership roles, and influence the thinking of others.

Implications of Achievement Levels in Table 9-4

The achievement levels in Table 9-4 contain implications regarding the degree to which California's eighth graders are prepared to take advantage of the reading, thinking, and writing opportunities in more challenging high school programs as well as the degree to which students are capable of using writing for purposes of citizenship. A review of the results summarized in Table 9-4 and the essays scored at levels 5 and 6 in chapters 3 through 8 reveal that there is little reason to worry about the ability of these students to benefit from a stimulating high school program—judging from one sample of their writing performance. Students writing at levels 5 and 6 who can produce purposeful, focused writing that reflects insight; elaborates main points or important scenes and people specifically and completely; shows versatile use of writing strategies well chosen for the writer's purpose; and reveals few errors in mechanics and spelling are achieving at a level that ensures the fullest possible contribution of writing to learning and to personal and intellectual growth. Such students have demonstrated that they can write with an authority and confidence that inspires readers' trust. Their writing is likely to help them ensure their rights and privileges, participate fully in community and school organizations and action groups, and influence the thinking of others.

Level 4 represents solid writing achievement. At this level the writing develops some ideas or points moderately well, indicates that the writer is aware of readers and controls relevant writing strategies for satisfying readers' expectations, maintains coherence, and commits occasional sentence-level errors. Students who have reached this level are poised and ready to benefit from instruction that will lead them still higher. Their level of writing proficiency promises to contribute to personal and intellectual growth through writing and promises to meet most of the writing demands of high school. These students, like those achieving at levels 5 and 6, have demonstrated that they can use written language at a level likely to help them ensure their rights and privileges, participate fully in community and school organizations and action groups, and influence the thinking of others—though perhaps not yet so fluently and engagingly as those achieving at levels 5 and 6.

The greatest percentage of grade eight students (34 percent) attained level 3 in writing ability. At that level, student writing is easily readable and usually more than a page in length but reveals little awareness of readers and limited development of ideas. The papers reveal only a narrow range of writing strategies and occasional lapses in coherence. There are noticeable sentence-level errors. Although this level of writing achievement still enables participation in learning and contributes to personal and intellectual growth, success with the writing demands of high school is likely to be limited unless substantial development in writing ability occurs.

Table 9-4

Statewide Average Achievement*

Score Point	Percent of California Grade 8 Students**	Cumulative Percent	General Performance Description
6 Exceptional Achievement	2	2	The student produces purposeful, focused writing that reflects exceptional insight into the writing situation; reveals commitment to the subject, confidence in presenting it, and careful consideration of readers' knowledge and values; shows versatile use of writing strategies appropriate to his or her purpose; engages readers from the beginning and closes in a satisfying way; maintains coherence throughout; elaborates main points or important scenes and people specifically and completely; and commits few if any sentence-level errors.
5 Commendable Achievement	10	12	The student produces purposeful, focused writing that reflects full understanding of the writing situation; reveals interest in the subject, confidence in presenting it, and awareness of readers; uses writing strategies well chosen for his or her purpose; maintains coherence and develops main points; and commits few sentence-level errors.
4 Adequate Achievement	28	40	The student produces writing that reflects good understanding of the writing situation; indicates that he or she is aware of readers and controls relevant writing strategies for satisfying readers' expectations; maintains coherence; develops some ideas or points moderately well; and commits occasional sentence-level errors.
3 Some Evidence of Achievement	34	74	The student produces writing that reflects understanding of the writing situation, shows that the writer controls only a narrow range of writing strategies. Reveals little awareness of readers and limited development of ideas (though usually more than a page in length); reveals occasional lapses in coherence; and commits noticeable sentence-level errors, though the essay is still easily readable.
2 Limited Evidence of Achievement	18	92	The student produces writing that is on-topic but reflects little understanding of the possibilities for presenting a subject to readers; shows restricted development of ideas (rarely more than a page in length); reveals occasional lapses in coherence; and commits frequent sentence-level errors that sometimes slow or stop the reader.
1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement	4	96	The student produces a few sentences (rarely more than a page) on topic; sometimes shows fragmentary or incoherent listing of loosely related sentences; and may commit errors in every sentence.
No Response	1	97	
Off Topic	2	99	

*Weighted average percentage of three scores in four types of writing.
**This column does not total to 100 percent because of off-topic, no response, and rounding.

At levels 2 and 1, students produce writing that is on topic but shows restricted fluency and development of ideas and reveals lapses in coherence and frequent sentence-level errors that sometimes slow or stop the reader. These levels of writing achievement are likely to limit and in some cases severely restrict participation in learning through writing. Success with the writing demands of high school is likely to be frustrated.

References

English–Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1987.

English–Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1988.

Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1988.

Langer, Judith, and Arthur Applebee. *How Writing Shapes Thinking*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1987.

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Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1986.

Chapter 10

Recommendations

California's statewide direct writing assessment reveals varied strengths and goals. Chapters 3 through 8 presented the findings for the six types of writing assessed. Chapter 9 summarized the scores on all types of writing, noted inferences to be made from them, and provided possible interpretations. Within this context, the members of the Writing Development Team and the English-Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee produced the following recommendations for teachers, school district and school-site administrators, parents, and teacher educators so that they may continue to work together to improve writing achievement in California.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers play a critical role in improving students' writing abilities. Their daily contact allows them the special opportunity to have the most direct influence on students' attitudes toward writing, their exposure to various types of writing, and their opportunity to develop their own writing skills. Toward this end, teachers should continue to contribute to writing achievement as follows:

- **Provide direct instruction in writing strategies required for different types of writing.** By helping students analyze their own writing along with published writing, teachers enable students to gain confidence with different writing styles and strategies. All students can be encouraged to work toward the highest possible writing achievement in several kinds of writing through frequent and sustained writing practice.
- **Ensure that students read widely and analyze the same type of reading they are writing.** To enhance their writing development in a type of writing, all students should have opportunities to read widely and analyze some works in depth. For example, they should be able to read autobiographies as they write autobiographical incidents and firsthand biographies; read short stories as they write stories; or read reviews of movies, books, and consumer products as they evaluate movies, books, or consumer products. The *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight* identifies published sources of reading like the types of writing CAP assesses.
- **Emphasize critical thinking and composing while at the same time encouraging students' mastery of conventions.** Work on spelling, usage, and mechanics need not delay extended composing. It should certainly not crowd out composing. Reading and writing come first. Grammar follows. Teachers should give the highest priority to rhetorical effectiveness in writing—in p[illegible]ing assignments, providing guidelines for revising, and evaluating student wri[illegible]g.
- **Pay special attention to the rhetorical requirements of story and the two types of argument assessed so far by CAP: problem solution and evaluation.** California's eighth graders demonstrate notably less success with these types of writing. For

example, statewide, while 52 percent achieved a score of 4 or better in report of information, only 33 percent did as well in story, 27 percent in evaluation, and 28 percent in problem solution. Engaging stories and convincing arguments are within the capability of all students. (The *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight* provides models, criteria, assignments, and teaching activities for story, problem solution, and evaluation.)

- **Offer instruction in writing that regularly involves a full composing process–prewriting (observation, reading, research, note taking, discussion, or brief exploratory writings); drafting, teacher conference, and guided peer critique; revising, editing, appreciative peer readarounds; self-appraisal; and display or publication.** This elaborate, extended framework of support for composing makes writing development possible for all students. (See the *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program* for a complete description of stages of the writing process.) Only frequent composing-process instruction can prepare students to do well on the CAP writing assessment because its criteria and standards cannot be learned in one-draft test simulations.
- **Broaden instruction to include important types of writing CAP does not assess.** Some types of writing—poetry, drama, longer prose fiction, writeups of on-the-spot observations and interviews, evaluations of performances or events requiring personal visits and on-site note taking, extended profiles of people or activities, for example —are desirable in a well-rounded English program but are not appropriate for large-scale assessment. All or nearly all writing assignments teachers value will improve students' performance on the types of writing CAP assesses.
- **Avoid formulaic teaching of the types of writing CAP assesses.** Reductive formulas will prevent students from achieving even level 4 in rhetorical effectiveness. A close reading of the writing guides (see *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight*) and scoring guides will show the variety and diversity of writing strategies available to students for any type of writing. The CAP assessment is based on knowledge of the different ways writers can produce exemplary writing of a particular type. Teachers should also be wary of textbooks that distort CAP types; for example, asking students to report on a novel's central dramatic event, when it would be far more important to ask them to reflect on it, speculate about it, or explore its significance.
- **Extend this intensive and sustained literacy program to all students.** Disadvantaged students, low achievers, and students whose primary language is other than English must have opportunities to compose in all the writing situations assessed by CAP. While students are still solving the puzzles of written English syntax and usage, they can think, talk, and write about school or community problems, movies, or books they liked or disliked, causes or effects of familiar trends and events, observations and interviews, and remembered personal experiences. They can even temporarily compose in their first language and then translate into English. (See "Students with Special Needs" in the *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight.*)
- **Inaugurate special-assistance tutorial programs for low-achieving students.** As long as English class sizes remain so large in California junior high and middle schools, teachers must take the lead in setting up drop-in writing centers, volunteer adult assistance, and cross-age tutoring programs. What is not needed are separate remedial classes. Instead, low-achieving students in particular need to talk regularly to someone about their ideas for writing, development of work in progress, possibilities for revising completed drafts, and opportunities to improve style and to conform to conventions of correctness in work to be graded. Adult volunteers, high school students from nearby high schools, or hourly-rate college students can staff junior high writing centers–but only after careful training and an understanding both of priorities for advising student writers at different stages of work in progress and of criteria for responding to different types of writing. (The CAP scoring guides and released essays provide good training materials.) Instead of "lay readers" who take students' finished work away for grades and

commentary, schools need "lay tutors" who can assist students during the composing process. Since cross-age tutoring programs have proven advantages for both tutor and tutee, teachers in every California junior high school should seriously consider setting up such a program, in which older students tutor younger students in the same school. For example, ninth graders might assist seventh and eighth graders with their writing assignments. A teacher would need release time for training, supervision, and coordination of tutors.

Recommendations for School District and School-Site Administrators

District and school-site administrators can provide leadership as follows:

- **Enable administrators at all levels (from the superintendent to school-site vice principals) to understand California's curriculum reform in English–language arts and to examine the higher expectations and standards of the CAP writing assessment.** Special workshops may need to be offered for school-site principals and vice principals.
- **Establish a school-site literacy policy that sets high standards for writing in all subjects.** Each school needs a published public plan for its students' writing development and a system for evaluating implementation of the plan.
- **Ensure that CAP writing assessment materials are available to all English-language arts teachers.** These materials include *A Report to Teachers on Writing Achievement: Grade 8* (1988), along with sample essays (mailed to all junior high and middle schools in October, 1988); and the *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight.* In its first edition, the *Writing Assessment Handbook* was mailed in November, 1986, to all school districts with an eighth grade. The handbook has now been substantially revised and will be distributed to all school districts with an eighth grade in September, 1989. (For further information about these documents, contact the CAP office at 916-322-2200.)
- **Bring all teachers together to discuss the possibilities for sustained writing in all classes at all levels.** A middle school with grades six through eight might want to divide up for special emphasis by grade level the eight types of writing assessed by CAP, ensuring, however, that each type is returned to at least once each year. Such a plan, combining writing with core and recreational reading requirements, would provide the systematic, articulated English–language arts curriculum called for in California's *English–Language Arts Framework.* (See Section IV, "Management Guidelines," in the *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight.*)
- **Assist teachers in recruiting well-qualified consultants.** If writing instruction is to move to a new level of effectiveness—to become an even higher priority within the context of a balanced literature-based English–language arts curriculum—then only the best-qualified consultants will be able to contribute useful materials and workshops. Many publishers and private consultants are already offering materials and workshops and promising to improve students' scores on the CAP writing assessment. Schools and school districts should evaluate these offerings carefully. School officials should especially consider whether published materials offer anything that is not already available in the teacher-developed, classroom-tested *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight.* Consultants promising formulas, easy solutions, or quick results will have little to offer teachers who want to teach seriously the types of writing CAP assesses and to prepare their students for higher achievement in these types. Consultants who are unable or unwilling to concern themselves with the specific rhetorical requirements of the types of writing CAP assesses will be able to add very little to what teachers already know. Members of CAP's Writing Development Team are qualified to advise other teachers, along with California Writing Project and California Literature Project fellows who have been specially trained to present CAP materials.
- **Assist teachers in developing school-site assessment programs, such as portfolio assessment or schoolwide assessment of writing samples.** The CAP writing assessment should not supplant individual student writing assessment at the school site. The CAP writing assessment provides teachers

with useful strategies and techniques for use in their own assessments. For example, the types of writing assessed in grade eight suggest a wide range of writings that might be included (or even required) in a writing portfolio, and criteria outlined in the CAP scoring guides could assist in evaluating a student's best work in a portfolio. Additional types of writing, such as poetry, song lyrics, and dialogue, might also be included. Writing portfolios can follow students from year to year and provide repeated occasions for students' assessment of their writing development and for parent conferences.

- **Make a special effort to help teachers schedule in-service training workshops extending over several sessions and led by qualified teacher-consultants.** The best staff development model for English–language arts provides for a series of workshops over a substantial period of time. If students are to meet the high literacy standards set by the CAP writing assessment, middle school and junior high school teachers need a deep understanding of the writing and thinking demands of a wide range of types of writing. Such understanding requires time to read, write, and discuss. One-time staff development presentations offering only further gimmicks will not deepen teachers' understanding of discourse or increase their students' achievement.
- **Reduce English class sizes.** Some junior high teachers are responsible daily for 180 students. Many are responsible for 160 or more. Few teachers have fewer than 140 students a day. Teachers must be able to talk to all students about their writing in progress, not just mark and grade their finished essays. The National Council of Teachers of English recommends 100 students.

Recommendations for Parents

Parents can encourage their children's writing development as follows:

- **Show their children that they are especially interested in all the writing they complete at school.** Children can read their writing aloud and display it on the refrigerator door, and they can talk about what they like best about a piece of writing. Parents should respond first of all to the ideas and insights in the writing. They should look for something to praise and should not correct errors unless asked by the children. To persist with the challenging work of learning to write, young writers need their writing to be taken seriously and to be praised and encouraged, especially by parents and siblings.
- **Ask their children to write.** Several writing situations are suggested by classroom teacher Mary Adamczyk (in the *New York Times*, January 3, 1988). Students may be encouraged to improve their writing by doing the following:
  - —Compose invitations to a dinner, party, or picnic.
  - —Compose stories for a sibling.
  - —List things needed for an overnight stay.
  - —Plead a case for an additional privilege–anything from a later bedtime to a driver's license.
  - —Make a deal ("If you let me . . . , then I'll . . ."). Considering faulty memories, this is a particularly good time to get it in writing.
  - —Justify an allowance increase with an expense account and budget, perhaps including a savings plan.
  - —Rationalize a special purchase (for example, a hamster or a computer video game).
  - —Negotiate wages for extra chores by submitting a written bid describing the work to be done, benefits, wages, guarantees, and deadlines.
- **Encourage good teaching of writing by inquiring specifically about the amount and variety of sustained (multiparagraph) writing their children are being assigned in every class.** Parents can ask how much of the writing will be revised for both rhetorical effectiveness and conventions. Parents can show their appreciation to teachers who make engaging assignments and encourage children's writing development.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

California's four-year colleges and universities can contribute to the movement toward higher

standards of literacy for all students in California's secondary schools as follows:

- **Offer English teachers in training a balanced program in literature, language study, and writing.** Teachers need writing workshops as well as literature courses. They must be knowledgeable about the full range of written discourse.
- **Introduce students in English methods courses to the new *English–Language Arts Framework* as well as to CAP writing assessment materials.** The *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight* and *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Twelve* can contribute substantially to teacher candidates' education in contemporary discourse. Model essays, scoring guides, writing assignments, classroom activities, and recommended readings provide rich materials for discussion and lesson planning.

School-Site Case Studies

Some schools in California have established successful writing programs by implementing the foregoing recommendations to at least some degree. Several schools made notable gains in their CAP scores from 1987 to 1988. Telephone interviews were conducted at several school sites where such gains occurred. From this process two case studies were developed which show how two schools in California (Crocker Middle School and South Valley Junior High School) achieved significant gains in writing achievement.

Crocker Middle School
Hillsborough City School District

Hillsborough's Crocker Middle School (CMS) managed to raise its scaled score from 358 in 1987 to 381 in 1988, a gain of 23 points. Crocker's 380 students are 70 percent white and 30 percent minority (primarily Asian), many of whom are recently arrived in the United States.

While improved language arts achievement has been a goal at CMS for five years, during 1987-88 some significant changes helped improve student writing, according to Principal Marilyn Miller. Class size for English teachers was reduced to 20 students. Since no additional teachers could be hired, teachers in other subjects agreed to "pick up the difference." Further, resources were committed to hiring readers to assist teachers with the additional writing workload. A retired CMS principal is one of the readers.

The school schedule, run on the modular system, was redesigned to give more time to English—three mods of 24 minutes each at grades seven and eight and four mods in grade six.

At CMS students write in every class. For example, in mathematics they respond to inquiries that pose a math problem. They first discover and apply the correct math formula and then write an explanation of how they determined the results. In all classes students take notes which are collected and graded by teachers. In science classes, students take lecture notes; and then during lab work, they take notes and also prepare a report on the lab work. In history–social science as well as other subjects, teachers have moved from "fill in the blank" questions to short answer, paragraph, and essay questions.

English Mentor Teacher Arlene Holt attended a two-day CAP workshop for eighth-grade teachers sponsored by the San Mateo County Office of Education—the presentations were made by teachers from the Bay Area Writing Project—and returned to share what she had learned with other teachers. At English Department meetings she reviewed the eight CAP writing types by devoting one meeting to each type. She discussed the criteria, the scoring guides, possible readings, sample essays, and so on.

Last year, the grade eight literature component at CMS was strengthened. Students read and analyze six books and write about them extensively in class. Students are also required to read and write on 12 other books outside of class and to complete a certain number of pages of recreational reading. As they read, students take notes on their reading, and they also respond to teachers' "notes and quotes" questions: the teacher provides a question about the reading, and the students must not only answer the question but also provide supporting evidence from the text in the form of quotes.

In grade six a poetry competition encourages students' self-evaluation and oral presentation skills. Every student presents a poem in class. Students are provided with a format for judging these readings, and the teacher also judges each reading. The combined teacher-class scores are used to select three students from each of the five sixth-grade classes. These 15 students then present their poems to a panel of five teachers from various subjects, each of whom scores students for a different specific feature. The top-scoring student receives a trophy and recognition by the school.

In grade eight, every student presents a graduation speech to his or her English class. As in the grade six poetry competition, students and teachers choose the three best speeches. Eighteen students present their speeches to a panel of community members who choose the three top speakers to speak at the graduation ceremony.

Writing samples are required of students three times each year. In late September or early October, students write to CAP-type prompts. The results are graded and analyzed by the English teachers to evaluate individual problems. Then the results for a particular grade are looked at in general.

In February, there is a CAP-based pretest in grade eight. The high schools in the district send writing prompts based on CAP prompts to CMS. After the students have written to these prompts, they are graded at an in-service training session which involves three of the grade eight English teachers and six high school teachers (two from each high school CMS feeds into). The high school teachers help the grade eight teachers determine what areas to emphasize for the remaining time

before the CAP assessment as well as for the balance of the school year.

- In May, students in grades six and seven provide a writing sample from a CAP-type prompt, which teachers analyze to evaluate the writing program.

South Valley Junior High
Gilroy Unified School District

Gilroy's South Valley Junior High (SVJH) raised its scaled score 31 points, from 256 in 1987 to 287 in 1988. SVJH's student body of 1,152 is 51 percent Hispanic, 44 percent Anglo, and 5 percent black and Asian.

During the 1987-88 school year, teachers at SVJH launched a major effort to improve students' writing. With the support of Principal Roger Cornia and Vice-Principal James Rogers and leadership from Carol Becker, Gilroy Unified School District Curriculum Director, 23 core subject teachers began meeting in September. (The "core" includes English and history–social science and meets for two hours and twenty-five minutes daily.)

The core teachers first examined the program quality criteria for grades nine through twelve, the *Model Curriculum Standards for English–Language Arts*, and the writing domains of the CAP direct writing assessment. Once a month from November through March, working with consultants from the Bay Area Writing Project, the core teachers completed five sessions of three hours each on integrating literature and writing. Concurrently, all 55 teachers at the school had five sessions with Bay Area Writing Project consultants on writing across the curriculum. On their own, the core teachers started meeting with teachers from other subjects and talking informally about the domains of writing within their subject field. For example, they might discuss the CAP domain report of information with a science teacher. As a result, there began to be considerable communication about writing and teaching among the teachers.

Two teachers attended the California Literature Project's 1987 summer institute and continued all year with institute follow-up activities. They brought back information which they shared with other teachers. (During the summer of 1988 they gave a workshop for other core teachers on the literary works to be taught during 1988-89.) Eight core teachers attended eight two-hour workshops on the CAP writing assessment offered by the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

Rogers and Cornia believe that this comprehensive approach to staff development contributed significantly to SVJH's first-year gain in writing achievement scores.

Becker also praised the initiative and commitment of SVJH's teachers. She described them as a "dynamic force." The core teachers met once a week, sharing examples of student writing and classroom activities. Selected teachers from each department formed a school effectiveness committee. Meeting with Principal Cornia to deal with problems that concern teachers, they expected to focus on philosophical or policy issues; but more often the committee dealt with the details of daily life in classrooms. In this way, Becker reports, the teachers felt empowered to deal with their true concerns.

Throughout the year, and in all of their in-service workshops, teachers rely on CAP's *Writing Assessment Handbook: Grade Eight*. All core teachers have copies of the handbook's writing guides.

SVJH has a comprehensive writing-across-the-curriculum program. Samples of student writing from every class are posted on the bulletin board of the teachers' lounge to serve as an inspiration to other teachers in that subject area. In this way, one math teacher can see how another math teacher is using writing in his or her class.

SVJH sent teachers to writing seminars and sponsored a five-part writing-across-the-curriculum in-service training for all teachers and all aides, including those in the physical education department.

Administrators and teachers decided that rather than conceal the date of the CAP writing assessment, they would promote it with "Good Luck on CAP!" banners in the halls during the month before the assessment. They served a special CAP breakfast for students on the morning of the test, during which students were treated to an enthusiastic pep talk to create a real sense of school spirit supporting the students going into the assessment.

Appendix A

English–Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee

Vic Abata
Office of the Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

Alice Addison
Santa Maria Joint Union High School District

Mary Barr
California Literature Project

Sheridan Blau
University of California, Santa Barbara

Valerie Brown-Troutt
Oakland Unified School District

Ruben Carriedo
San Diego City Unified School District

Fran Claggett
Education Consultant

Charles Cooper
University of California, San Diego

Winfield Cooper
San Dieguito Union High School District

Cathy D'aoust
Saddleback Valley Unified School District

Jo Fyfe
Mt. Diablo Unified School District

Phillip Gonzales
California State University, Dominguez Hills

James Gray
California Writing Project

Mel Grubb
Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools

Colleen Kita
Culver City Unified School District

Sandy Lucero
Office of the Tehama County Superintendent of Schools

Sidney Morrison
Torrance Unified School District

Bob Noreen
California State University, Northridge

Raymond Paredes
University of California, Los Angeles

Claire Pelton
San Jose Unified School District

Alpha Quincy
Education Consultant

Sharon Shanahan
Office of the Stanislaus County Superintendent of Schools

Mary Ann Smith
California Writing Project

Rob Thais
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

Lloyd Thomas
Los Angeles Community College

Sally Thomas
Claremont Unified School District

Maria Valdivia
Hemet Unified School District

Marilyn Whirry
South Bay Union High School District

Helen Ying
Oakland Unified School District

Beth Breneman
California State Department of Education

Juanita Jorgenson
California State Department of Education

Appendix B

1988 CAP Essay Readers

The grade eight essays were scored by the following persons during the summer of 1988. The readers are identified here as a resource for teachers and school administrators who may wish to take advantage of the training and knowledge gained through participation in the scoring process.

Walnut Creek Regional Site

Jan Adams, Miller Creek School, San Rafael
Ed Allen, Kent Middle School, Kentfield
Tom Atkins, Hayward High School
Marlene Baker, Riverview Intermediate School, Pittsburg
Jan Brink, McKinleyville High School
Joan H. Brown, Alameda High School
Kathryn Bussey, Benicia Middle School, Oakland
William Campbell, Claremont Middle School, Oakland
Trudy Craig, Tomales Elementary School
Virginia Craik, Diamond Valley School, Markleeville
Patricia Crotti, Sunset High School, Hayward
Vivian Cullen, Sequoia Middle School, Pleasant Hill
Connie Cushing, Markham Middle School, San Jose
Charles D. Evans, Pittsburg High School
Louise M. Evans, La Cumbre Junior High School, Santa Barbara
Julie E. Fowler, Monte Vista High School, Danville
Marlene Gildersleeve, Bancroft Junior High School, San Leandro
Linnette Gray, University of California, Berkeley
Roy Hagar, College Park High School, Pleasant Hill
Jeffrey G. Hallford, Newark Memorial High School, San Jose
Skeeter Hecox, Charlotte Wood Middle School, Danville
Norris Hill, San Jose Unified School District
Rosemerry R. Hill, (Will C.) Wood Middle School, Alameda
Judy Holmes, James Lick Middle School, San Francisco
Barry Hottle, Thornton Junior High School, Fremont
Leslie Howell, Guerneville School
Fran Hubbert, Vista Grande Elementary School, Danville
Jewel Hyland, Rolling Hills School, Watsonville
Orden Ichinaga, Edwin Markham Middle School, San Jose
Mary C. Johnson, Lagunitas Elementary School, San Geronimo
Sylvia S. Jones, Redwood High School, Larkspur
Alice Kawazoe, University of California, Berkeley
Sharon A. Keeton, San Ramon Valley High School, Danville
Nanette Koelsch, Horace Mann Academic Middle School, San Francisco
Rosemary Kowalski, Sequoia Middle School, Pleasant Hill
Lynette Kronick, Rohnert Park Junior High School
Marilyn Laver, Los Cerros Intermediate School, Danville
Mary E. Legato, Glenbrook Middle School, Concord
Jane Leonard, Martin Luther King Middle School, San Francisco
Margaret Lunday, Washington Junior High School, Cloverdale
Daniel Manske, Elmhurst Middle School, Oakland
Phyllis L. Marcus, Sepulveda Junior High School, Los Angeles
Jean McCloskey, Castillero Middle School, San Jose
Bryce Moore, White Hill School, Fairfax
Michael Newman, Frick Junior High School, Oakland
Barbara L. Olsen, Foothill Middle School, Walnut Creek
Sharon Osgood, Alpine County Unified School District
Gloria Pellom, Monte Vista High School, Danville
William Penna, Santa Cruz High School
Barbara L. Petrock, Soquel High School
JoAnn Pickell, Hayward High School
Margie L. Powell, El Dorado Intermediate School, Concord
Tazuru J. Pratico, Independence High School, San Jose
Robert Pressnall, Albany Middle School
Barbara Quibell, San Ramon High School, Danville
Marianne Rackham, New Haven Middle School, Union City
Bruce Roberts, New Haven Middle School, Union City
A. Schlobohm-Durrett, Altimira Intermediate School, Sonoma
Faith B. Schultz, King Estates Junior High School, Oakland
Rick A. Scott, Tompkins Elementary School, Tehachapi
Michael C. Scullion, San Jose Unified School District
Donald R. Spagel, Pine Hollow Intermediate School, Concord
Kimberley Strain, La Vista Intermediate School, Hayward
Jim Sullivan, El Camino Junior High School, Santa Maria
Judy Taylor, Hayward High School
Juliana Whitten, Martin Luther King, Sausalito
Miriam Winston, McClymonds High School, Oakland

Sacramento Regional Site

Judy Altier, C. Sullivan Middle School, Fairfield
Joanne Arellanes, Cambridge Heights Elementary, Citrus Heights

Dan Austin, Casa Roble High School, Sacramento
Mary Baker, Cardoza Elementary School, Riverbank
Linda Blaney, South Tahoe High School
Jane Bryant, Winston Churchill Intermediate School, Carmichael
Bob Burbridge, Cambridge Heights Elementary School, Citrus Heights
Theresa A. Caldwell, Monte Vista Middle School, Tracy
Albert J. Capovilla, Bella Vista High School, Fair Oaks
Alexander Carlon, San Hedrin High School, Willits
Wayne L. Catron, C. A. Jacobs Intermediate School, Dixon
Doris Chandler, Bowman Elementary School, Auburn
Linda A. Chrabas, Modesto City Schools, Modesto
Margaret Coffey, San Juan High School, Citrus Heights
Shirley F. Collier, Ione Senior Elementary School
Joan W. Culver, Winston Churchill Intermediate School, Carmichael
Margaret DeMott, La Loma Junior High School, Modesto
Patricia Dusterhoft, Northside Elementary School, Cool
Doug Edwards, Ione Senior Elementary School
Judy English, Starr King Intermediate School, Carmichael
Robert Fossgreen, Joseph Kerr Junior High School, Elk Grove (Retired)
Janna Gard, South Tahoe High School
Kent Gill, Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior High School, Davis
Robert Hagopian, Scotts Valley Middle School
Jeanette Hampton, Albert Einstein Middle School, Sacramento
Mary Bonnie Hannon, Yuba Feather Elementary School, Challenge
Sam Hatch, Tokay High School, Lodi
Robert Heichelbech, San Juan Unified School District, Sacramento
W. Bruce Holden, Nevada Union High School, Grass Valley
Linda Holte, Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior High School, Davis
Susan Hulsey, Pasteur Intermediate School, Sacramento
Midge Hunerlach, Highlands High School, North Highlands
Sheralyn Ilg, Lyman Gilmore Intermediate School, Grass Valley
Sally Johns, Magnolia, Grass Valley
Leilani Johnson, Modesto High School
Laurann M. Kahler, Colton Middle School, Monterey
Andrea Mello, Winston Churchill Intermediate School, Carmichael
Barbara Millhollen, Center Junior High School, North Highlands
Adele M. Montgomery, Camino Union School District
Judy Murray, Barrett Intermediate School, Carmichael
Patricia Neff, Sam Brannan Middle School, Sacramento
Kay O'Hara, Lodi High School, Lodi
Ann Okamura, Joseph Kerr Junior High School, Elk Grove
Patricia Padley, Highland High School, North Highlands
Leona F. Pearce, Sutter Middle School, Sacramento
Rachel Perez, Roosevelt Junior High School, Modesto
Barbara Reel, Barrett Intermediate School, Carmichael
Jan Rientjes, East Union High School, Manteca
Arlene Rose, Bella Vista High School, Fair Oaks
Eugene C. Ross, Herbert Green Middle School, Placerville
Ceretha Sherrill, Grant Union High School, Sacramento
Julia Simpson, Sunny Hills High School, Fullerton
Stacey A. Smith, Lee Junior High School, Woodland
Judith Ventre, Stockton Unified School District
Harrie A. Walker, Clover Middle School, Tracy
Laura Watson, Joseph Kerr Junior High School, Elk Grove
David W. Weinstock, Rio Americano High School, Sacramento
Vicki Welch, Howe Avenue Elementary, Sacramento
Starla Wierman, Winters Junior High School
Cornelius Witt, Calla High School, Manteca
Donna Zahl, Lee Junior High School, Woodland

Lawndale

Beverly G. Alpay, Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District
Nancy Bartelt, Hull Middle School, Torrance
Michael Battin, Sun Valley Junior High School
Leslie Beckwith, John Muir Junior High School, Los Angeles
Donna B. Behnke, Belvedere Junior High School, Los Angeles
Lynn M. Berg, Rim of the World Unified School District
Diane Berger, Burbank High School
Sheila Bohana, Vanguard Junior High School, Los Angeles
Nicholas Bradley, Sun Valley Junior High School
Sherryl Broyles, Los Angeles Unified School District
Bonnie Buchwald, Los Angeles Unified School District
Evelyn J. Burroughs, Mount Miguel High School, Spring Valley
Tanya C. Cappas, Paul Revere Junior High School, Los Angeles
Lois Clark, Mission Junior High School, Riverside
Gene Costa, Jordon Junior High School, Burbank
James L. Davis, Tehachapi Unified School District
Y. Divans-Hutchinson, Markham Intermediate School, Los Angeles
Alfee Enciso, Markham Intermediate School, Los Angeles
Barbara T. Hawkins, South High School, Torrance
Amy L. Hejna, Rosemont Junior High School, Glendale
Jose I. Hernandez, T. S. King Junior High School, Los Angeles
Sheila Hill, Carson High School
Donald W. Hixson, Santa Maria Elementary School
Kay N. Hooley, Luther Burbank Junior High School
Dalene Johnson, Clifton Middle School, Monrovia
Pat Kelley, Sierra Vista High School, Baldwin Park
Georgie Kelm, John Muir Junior High School, Burbank
Debra Kruse, Kraemer Junior High School, Placentia
Evaline Kruse, Audubon Junior High School, Los Angeles
Robert C. Laird, Sun Valley Junior High School
Maynae Lew, Los Angeles Unified School District
Harriette Lewis, Walton Middle School, Compton
Joyce W. Linder, Torrance Unified School District

Anita Gail Lindsey, Bancroft Junior High School, Los Angeles
Sheri Livingston, Wilson Junior High School, Glendale
Helen Lodge, California State University, Northridge
E. Lynda Markham, Sun Valley Junior High School
Mary S. Miasnik, Belvedere Junior High School, Los Angeles
Lois Moe, Northview Middle School, Duarte
Clint Moran, El Camino Junior High School, Santa Maria
Genevieve Murguia, South Pasadena High School
Patricia O'Connor, Culver City Middle School
Thomas Pampalone, Balboa Middle School, Ventura
Katharine Paull, Los Angeles Unified School District
Bonnie Pilsecker, Almondale Middle School
Elane Polin, West High School, Torrance
Paul E. Purkhiser, Royal Oak Intermediate School, Los Angeles
Mary Rivers, Vanguard Middle School, Los Angeles
Laurie Rodsky, Culver City Unified School District
Sandy Rogers, Hamilton Junior High School, Long Beach
Maie Dell Rose, Berendo Junior High School, Los Angeles
Jean Hill Savoy, Luther Burbank Junior High School
Gail Scherr, Henry Clay Junior High School, Los Angeles
Mollyann Schroeder, Los Angeles Unified School District
Joel Shapiro, Rosemont Junior High School
Thom Wade, Westlake High School, Conejo Valley
David S. Wasserman, Luther Burbank Junior High School
Alexandra Wells, South Pasadena Junior High School
Richard Witte, Jefferson Intermediate School, San Gabriel
Patricia L. Woodruff, Culver City Middle School
William A. Younglove, Lindberg Junior High School, Long Beach
Sally Zaremba, East Whittier Middle School
Josephine Zarro, Manual Arts High School, Los Angeles

Fresno Regional Site

Judy Altermatt, Pioneer Junior High School, Porterville
John A. Angelo, Salinas High School
Judy L. Bedell, Cunha Intermediate School, Half Moon Bay
Wanda Begley, Forkner Elementary School, Fresno
Sharon Bisso, Coast Union High School, Cambria
Alta Bjornsen, Kings Canyon Middle School, Fresno
Cathy L. Blanchfield, Ft. Miller Middle School, Fresno
Eileen M. Boland, Roosevelt Junior High School, Selma
David E. Bradley, James Mallock Elementary School, Fresno
Stephoni Brown, Norris Junior High School, Bakersfield
Nancy Bruce, Aetis Junior High School, Bakersfield
Ardith Buttke, Lincoln Elementary School, Taft
Judith Carlson, Fresno County Office of Education
Mary Fran Claggett, Alameda High School
Donald Corley, Winchell Elementary School, Fresno
Herbert C. Danielsen, East Union High School, Manteca
Janet Dencker, Bullard High School, Fresno
Gayle Dervishian, Lone Starr School, Sanger
Martha I. Dudley, Roosevelt Junior High School, Selma
Donald J. Ferrer, McLane High School, Fresno
Roger Halberg, Wells Elementary School, Tehachapi
Karen L. Hale, Clovis High School, Clovis
Jim Hamilton, Tenaya Middle School, Fresno
Beverly J. Hardison, Tioga Middle School, Fresno
Dottie Harkness, Toby Lawless Elementary School, Fresno
Bonnie B. Heifetz, Sequoia Freshman, Fresno
D. Helman-Stiers, Jefferson Elementary School, Clovis
Christine Herman, Alisal High School, Salinas
Fernando Hernandez, Winchell Elementary School, Fresno
Sue Heth, Education Center, Fresno
Lorraine Hood, Roeding Elementary School, Fresno
Eunice Isaak, Kings Canyon Middle School, Fresno
Eliza-Beth Jensen, Centennial Elementary School, Fresno
DeWitt Johnson, Ygnacio Valley High School, Concord
Margaret J. Johnson, Reedley High School
Rose Marie Johnson, Toby Lawless Elementary School, Fresno
Wynona King, Greenfield Junior High School, Bakersfield
Don Kisner, Duncan Polytechnical High School, Fresno
Cyn Koukos, Clovis High School
Ulrike Krieg, Engvall Elementary School, Lemoore
Jeanne Lakeman, Jefferson Junior High School, Madera
Joseph E. Lane, Mt. Whitney High School, Visalia
Barbara Larion, Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, Hanford
Sharon Lee, Engvall Elementary School, Lemoore
Judith Lindeleaf, Washington Junior High School, Sanger
Judith A. Machado, Tulare Union High School
John W. Martinez, Winchell Elementary School, Fresno
Barbara Mason, Le Grand Union High School
Clark Mello, Edison High School, Fresno
Teresa Mendez, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Madera
Tom Moradian, Sanger High School
Susan W. Morrison, Millview Elementary School, Madera
Helen Negri, Washington Junior High School, Sanger
Paul Osserman, Columbia Elementary School, Fresno
Richard Pandukht, Bullard High School, Fresno
Susan Pansarosa, Winchell Elementary School, Fresno
Carol M. Penara, Pinole Valley High School
Marie Prinz, Tehipite Middle School, Fresno
Karyl Rubin, Tioga Middle School, Fresno
Veronica Thomas, Roosevelt Junior High School, Selma
William H. Thomas, Mt. Diablo Unified School District, Concord

Ofelia S. Watkins, Turner Elementary School, Fresno
M. Jane Weatherby, Paulding Intermediate School, Arroyo Grande
Gail A. Williams, Ft. Miller Middle School, Fresno

San Diego Regional Site

Bonnie Baer, Whitman Elementary School, San Diego
Carlene Barros, Standley Junior High School , San Diego
Marilou Baumgarten, Castle Park High School, Chula Vista
Carol F. Benson, Pauma Elementary School, Pauma Valley
Penny Bernal, San Dieguito High School, Encinitas
Terry Jo Bernard, Mann Middle School , San Diego
Barbara J. Brooks, Granite Hills High School, El Cajon
Robert T. Burnett, San Diego High School
Loyal Carlon, San Diego Unified School District
Jeanne Carrington, Cajon Valley Junior High School, El Cajon
Philip S. Catalano, Fillmore Junior High School
Donna L. Corby, Central Elementary School , San Diego
James Dunwoody, Palm Junior High School, Lemon Grove
Linda Duran, Montgomery High School , San Diego
Marjorie J. Eaton, Valley Junior High School, Carlsbad
Kenneth Fairchild, Harbour View Elementary, Huntington Beach
Cheryl Fasig, Pioneer Junior High School, Upland
Barbara Forcier, Roosefelt Junior High School , San Diego
Anne Foster, West Hills High School, Santee
Sue Fourmet, Mary Henck Intermediate School, Lake Arrowhead
Mary Ann Fox, La Paloma Elementary, Fallbrook
Carol Foy-Stromberg, Patrick Henry High School , San Diego
Betty J. Galbo, Taft Junior High School, San Diego
Randel E. Gibson, Hill Creek Elementary School, Santee
Carol L. Gilmore, Chula Vista Junior High School
Lizz Goldman, Ada Harris School, Cardiff
Mary Jane Grimstad, Granite Hills High School, El Cajon
Terri Harvey, Grant School District
Kathleen Hayes, Valhalla High School, El Cajon
Caroline S. Huz, Fontana High School
Gloria L. Jones, Grossmont High School, La Mesa
Kerin Kelleher, Mann Middle School, San Diego
Joni Kunzler, Roosevelt Junior High School, San Diego
Marilyn Maher, MacArthur Intermediate School, Santa Ana
Sandra Martineau, Castle Park High School, Chula Vista
Melissa Mason, Fontana High School
Donald Mayfield, San Diego Unified School District
John McClurg, Weaverville School District
Patricia Mihalik, Ramona High School
Linda Miles, Hill Creek Elementary School, Santee
Marilyn Miles, Chula Vista City School District
Raquel Muhammed, San Diego High School
Vivian Kay Peters, Hidden Valley Middle School, Escondido
Bonnie Remington, Hill Creek Elementary School, Santee
Michael Rodriguez, Clayton Valley High School, Concord
Paul A. Rooney, Standley Junior High School, San Diego
Bonnie Saferstein, Montgomery Junior High School , San Diego
Stefany Sanders, San Onofre Elementary School, Fallbrook
Flossie D. Sellers, Temecula Valley High School
Dixie Smith, Myron Witter School, Brawley
Vickey D. Smith, Tierra del Sol Middle School, Lakeside
John Strand, Monte Vista High School, Danville
Lorraine Sundberg, Castle Park Middle School, Chula Vista
Rachel A. Sweet, Brea Olinda High School
Robert Tazioli, Thompson Junior High School, Bakersfield
Judy Tillyer, Valley Center Elementary School
Victoria Toth, Pine Hollow Intermediate School, Concord
Joan Vandenberg, Santana High School, Santee
Fred Vogt, Delano High School
Dawn M. Whalen, San Dieguito High School, Encinitas
Patricia Whittington, Olive Peirce Junior High School, Ramona
John Winbury, Black Mountain Middle School, San Diego
Ed Yandall, University City High School, San Diego

Anaheim Regional Site

Deborah Acosta, Jones Junior High School, Baldwin Park
Susan Armstrong, Tehachapi Independent Study
Paul Clement August, Lowell Middle School, Oakland
Marlene C. Baker, Lone Hill Intermediate School, San Dimas
Carol Ballard, Sierra Vista Junior High School, Baldwin Park
Douglas Barker, Markham Intermediate School, Los Angeles
Grace L. Boerner, Sierra Middle School, Riverside
Darlene L. Bowe, McGarvin Intermediate School, Westminster
Carol Brown, Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District
Linda J. Browning, Magnolia Junior High School, Chino
M. "Randy" Brunk, Mulberry Elementary School, Whittier
Catherine Burkhart, La Serna High School, Whittier
Rosalee Carlson, Glendora Unified School District
Lois Anne Chapman, La Veta Elementary School, Orange
Carmen Clanin, East Whittier City Schools
Stephanie H. Colby, Lakeside Middle School, Irvine
Gay Davidson-Shepard, Mesa View Elementary School, Huntington Beach
Kenneth A. De Shan, Jr., Chaparral Middle School, Walnut Valley
Joyce M. Duda, Las Palmas Intermediate School, Covina
Sue Durkee, Fulton Middle School, Fountain Valley
Betty Elsing, Downey Unified School District
William Fitzgerald, Badger Springs Elementary School, Moreno Valley
Susan Forbes, Ontario High School

Linda Goldstone, Ramona Intermediate School, La Verne
Cory Griswold, Chaparral Junior High School, Walnut
Kathleen Grubb, John Marshall Junior High School, Long Beach
Douglas Hairgrove, Cope Junior High School, Redlands
Mary Hubler, Sutter Junior High School, Canoga Park
Lona A. Keelan, Norco Junior High School
John Keiter, Spring View Elementary School, Ocean View School District
Sharon Korbe, Durfee Elementary School, El Monte
Shirley B. Lind, Lexington Junior High School, Cypress
Jane Livezey, California State University, Fullerton
Louise (Brandi) Loyd, Masuda Middle School, Fountain Valley
Mary N. Marino, Kranz Middle School, El Monte
Donald Marshall, Hewes Middle School, Tustin
Joy Ann Martineau, Warner Intermediate School, Westminster
Valerie McCall, Bret Harte Preparatory, Los Angeles
Michael McClure, Trabuco Hills High School, Mission Viejo
Judy McColl, Bellflower Unified School District
Liane C. McDonough, Magnolia Junior High School, Chino
Rose Moreno, El Rancho Unified School District, Pico Rivera
Kathryn Nunan Moros, Shorecliffs Junior High School, San Clemente
Patricia S. Naqui, San Marino High School
Chuck Ogle, McFadden Intermediate School, Santa Ana
Mark Peterschick, Jonata Elementary School, Buellton
Carole Pierce, Royal Oak Intermediate School, Covina
Nancy Preston, Casimir Middle School, Torrance
Katherine F. Rose, Haskell Junior High School, Cerritos
Nancy J. Ryder, McAuliffe Middle School, Los Alamitos
Robert L. Sabus, Rowland Unified School District
Carol J. Schowalter, El Roble Intermediate School, Claremont
Mary Scott, Marina High School, Huntington Beach
Barbara A. Seelgen, Lakewood High School
Betty A. Service, Santa Fe Middle School, Monrovia
T. Mark Sevold, Granada Elementary School, Alhambra
Ken Sparks, Yorba Linda Middle School
Ellen Swieck, Mayfair High School, Lakewood
Carol Tateishi, Ross School
Candace H. Taylor, South Pasadena Junior High School
Sharon K. Trydahl, Irvine Intermediate School, Garden Grove
Sylvia Urwin, Alta Loma Junior High School
Linda A. Velasco, Dodson Magnet Junior High School, San Pedro
Marilyn C. Wells, Traweek Intermediate School, West Covina
Hilary J. White, Upland High School
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